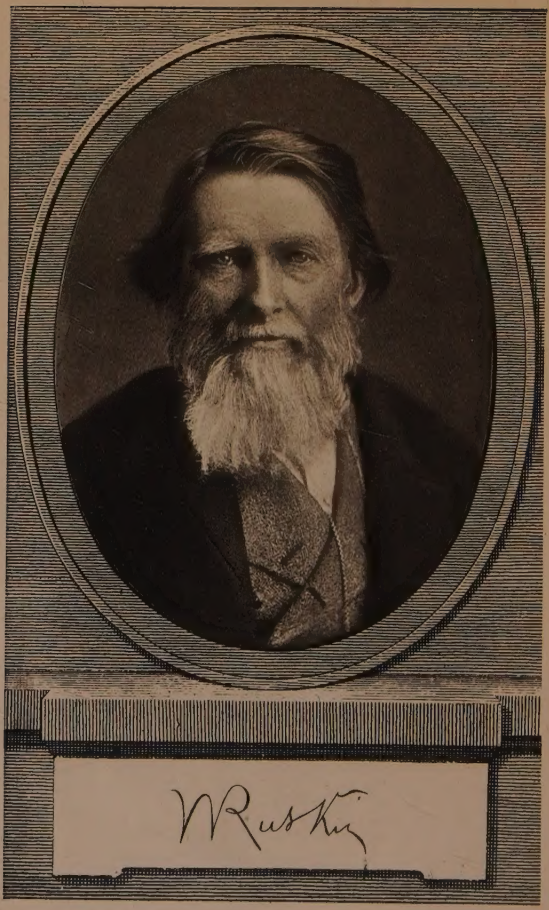
LITTLE MASTERPIECES


W Ruskin

Little Masterpieces

Edited by Bliss Perry

JOHN RUSKIN

THE TWO BOYHOODS

THE SLAVE SHIP

THE MOUNTAIN GLOOM

THE MOUNTAIN GLORY

VENICE

ST. MARK'S

ART AND MORALS

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE

PEACE

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Introduction

Editor's Introduction

MR. RUSKIN'S writings have been so copious, and so varied in theme and temper, that no two of his admirers would be likely to agree in their selection of characteristic passages from his books. The editor of the present volume cannot hope that it will wholly satisfy those readers who already know their Ruskin well. He has simply endeavored, by a chronological arrangement of carefully chosen extracts, to show something of the succession of themes that have occupied Mr. Ruskin's mind, as well as the sort of writing which early established and has long sustained his reputation as a master of English.

The hero of his first work, "Modern Painters," was the artist Turner. Readers were first attracted by his descriptive eloquence, rather than by the intrinsic worth of his message to the public. Here was a new kind of prose,—though one more carefully modelled upon Richard Hooker and other old writers than most people

imagined,— a prose captivating in its music, its color, and the long supple coil of its periods. The chapter entitled "The Two Boyhoods"— Giorgione's and Turner's — is a good example of this early manner. It is followed here by Mr. Ruskin's famous description of Turner's "Slave Ship," a piece of writing which takes as much liberty with the picture as the picture in turn does with nature. Such writing, in Mr. Ruskin's hands, is strangely suggestive to the imagination, but in the hands of his imitators it has done much to obliterate the natural distinction between literary and graphic art and to vitiate the later prose of England and America.

The chapters upon "The Mountain Gloom" and "The Mountain Glory," reprinted here in part, show the patient study of scientific detail, the enthusiasm for natural beauty, and the tendency to moralize upon the relations of beauty to conduct which from the first have characterized Mr. Ruskin's mind. In any one of these three directions his influence over his contemporaries would have been enough to give him distinction, but it is quite possible that what he has done to help people to use their eyes may ultimately prove a more valuable contribution to his generation than all his subtle and ingenious essays in philosophical analysis.

But there are many other ways in which he

has guided the thought and feeling of cultivated people. Few travellers visit Florence and Venice without acquainting themselves, however superficially, with Mr. Ruskin's criticisms of the architecture and allied arts of the great artistic epochs. "The Stones of Venice" contains some of his most carefully elaborated work. I have reprinted the chapter describing the situation of Venice, as well as the paragraphs devoted to the exterior of St. Mark's.

As Mr. Ruskin advanced in life, the ethical cast of his mind predominated more and more over the æsthetic. The analyst of the relations of science to art, the critic who traced the lines of the building back to the fortitude and faith of the builders, brooded increasingly over the fate of common men and women in this perplexed age of the world. The lecture on "The Mystery of Life and its Arts" expresses some of his own perplexity and his strenuous sense of the duties that are to be performed. The lecture on "The Relation of Art to Morals" is an acute and suggestive discourse upon a subject that has always occupied his attention, but which he has rarely discussed so much to the reader's profit as here. The fragment from "The Eagle's Nest" entitled "Peace" may appropriately close these selections from the books of a man who has felt most keenly the discords of modern life, but who has not always

been able to point out with any practical helpfulness a way of escape.

It will be seen that I have not drawn upon Mr. Ruskin's more technical productions, either his studies of rock and leaf, flower and bird, or his detailed criticisms of architecture and painting. Nor has anything been borrowed from his later writings in the field of political economy and social science. There is much in these later books that is whimsical and perverse, much wilful glorification of mediævalism, much following of his "master" Carlyle's bad fashion of ignoring the best forces of his own age. The Ruskinian political economy has not yet been accepted by the economists, any more than his theories of art have been accepted by the critics, or his workingmen's gospel believed in very largely by the workingmen themselves. But Mr. Ruskin has found a sure refuge in the "general reader," who knows pretty well in a vague way what he wants from a book, and who is, after all, the final judge of an author's place in literature. The "general reader" has long been loyal to Mr. Ruskin, liking not only his knowledge of his subject and his skill with words, but his noble passion for beauty and goodness, his noble scorn of injustice and evil. Looked at too narrowly, Mr. Ruskin's career seems a succession of caprices. He has worshipped, in turn, Turner and Tintoretto, Botti-

celli and Carlyle; his concrete art teaching has repeatedly changed its substance, and his religious faith its form.* Yet in the true perspective these contradictions disappear, his spirit and intention become plain, and the whole power of an extraordinarily gifted man seems steadily directed towards making human life more beautiful and bountiful.

BLISS PERRY.

* *Fors Clavigera*, Letters LXXVI., LXXVIII.

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The Two Boyhoods

The Two Boyhoods

MODERN PAINTERS, PART IX, CHAP. IX.

§ 1. BORN half-way between the mountains and the sea — that young George of Castelfranco — of the Brave Castle: — Stout George they called him, George of Georges, so goodly a boy he was — Giorgione.

Have you ever thought what a world his eyes opened on — fair, searching eyes of youth? What a world of mighty life, from those mountain roots to the shore; — of loveliest life, when he went down, yet so young, to the marble city — and became himself as a fiery heart to it?

A city of marble, did I say? nay, rather a golden city, paved with emerald. For truly, every pinnacle and turret glanced or glowed, overlaid with gold, or bossed with jasper. Beneath, the unsullied sea drew in deep breathing, to and fro, its eddies of green wave. Deep-hearted, majestic, terrible as the sea, — the men of Venice moved in sway of power and war; pure as her pillars of alabaster, stood her mo-

thers and maidens; from foot to brow, all noble, walked her knights; the low bronzed gleaming of sea-rusted armor shot angrily under their blood-red mantle-folds. Fearless, faithful, patient, impenetrable, implacable,— every word a fate — sate her senate. In hope and honor, lulled by flowing of wave around their isles of sacred sand, each with his name written and the cross graved at his side, lay her dead. A wonderful piece of world. Rather, itself a world. It lay along the face of the waters, no larger, as its captains saw it from their masts at evening, than a bar of sunset that could not pass away; but, for its power, it must have seemed to them as if they were sailing in the expanse of heaven, and this a great planet, whose orient edge widened through ether. A world from which all ignoble care and petty thoughts were banished, with all the common and poor elements of life. No foulness, nor tumult, in those tremulous streets, that filled, or fell, beneath the moon; but rippled music of majestic change, or thrilling silence. No weak walls could rise above them; no low-roofed cottage, nor straw-built shed. Only the strength as of rock, and the finished setting of stones most precious. And around them, far as the eye could reach, still the soft moving of stainless waters, proudly pure; as not the flower, so neither the thorn nor the thistle, could grow in

the glancing fields. Ethereal strength of Alps, dream-like, vanishing in high procession beyond the Torcellan shore; blue islands of Paduan hills, poised in the golden west. Above, tree winds and fiery clouds ranging at their will;—brightness out of the north, and balm from the south, and the stars of the evening and morning clear in the limitless light of arched heaven and circling sea.

Such was Giorgione's school — such Titian's home.

§ 2. Near the south-west corner of Covent Garden, a square brick pit or well is formed by a close-set block of houses, to the back windows of which it admits a few rays of light. Access to the bottom of it is obtained out of Maiden Lane, through a low archway and an iron gate; and if you stand long enough under the archway to accustom your eyes to the darkness, you may see on the left hand a narrow door, which formerly gave quiet access to a respectable barber's shop, of which the front window, looking into Maiden Lane, is still extant, filled in this year (1860), with a row of bottles, connected, in some defunct manner, with a brewer's business. A more fashionable neighborhood, it is said, eighty years ago than now — never certainly a cheerful one — wherein a boy being born on St. George's day, 1775, began soon after to take interest in the world of Covent

Garden, and put to service such spectacles of life as it afforded.

§ 3. No knights to be seen there, nor, I imagine, many beautiful ladies; their costume at least disadvantageous, depending much on incumbency of hat and feather, and short waists; the majesty of men founded similarly on shoe-buckles and wigs;—impressive enough when Reynolds will do his best for it; but not suggestive of much ideal delight to a boy.

"Bello ovile dov' io dormii agnello:" of things beautiful, besides men and women, dusty sunbeams up or down the street on summer mornings; deep furrowed cabbage leaves at the greengrocer's; magnificence of oranges in wheelbarrows round the corner; and Thames' shore within three minutes' race.

§ 4. None of these things very glorious; the best, however, that England, it seems, was then able to provide for a boy of gift: who, such as they are, loves them—never, indeed, forgets them. The short waists modify to the last his visions of Greek ideal. His foregrounds had always a succulent cluster or two of greengrocery at the corners. Enchanted oranges gleam in Covent Gardens of the Hesperides; and great ships go to pieces in order to scatter chests of them on the waves. That mist of early sunbeams in the London dawn crosses, many and many a time, the clearness of Italian air; and

by Thames' shore, with its stranded barges and glidings of red sail, dearer to us than Lucerne lake or Venetian lagoon,— by Thames' shore we will die.

§ 5. With such circumstance round him in youth, let us note what necessary effects followed upon the boy. I assume him to have had Giorgione's sensibility (and more than Giorgione's, if that be possible) to color and form. I tell you farther, and this fact you may receive trustfully, that his sensibility to human affection and distress was no less keen than even his sense for natural beauty — heart-sight deep as eye-sight.

Consequently, he attaches himself with the faithfullest child-love to everything that bears an image of the place he was born in. No matter how ugly it is,— has it anything about it like Maiden Lane, or like Thames' shore? If so, it shall be painted for their sake. Hence, to the very close of life, Turner could endure ugliness which no one else, of the same sensibility, would have borne with for an instant. Dead brick walls, blank square windows, old clothes, market-womanly types of humanity — anything fishy and muddy, like Billingsgate or Hungerford Market, had great attraction for him; black barges, patched sails, and every possible condition of fog.

§ 6. You will find these tolerations and affec-

tions guiding or sustaining him to the last hour of his life; the notablest of all such endurances being that of dirt. No Venetian ever draws anything foul; but Turner devoted picture after picture to the illustration of effects of dinginess, smoke, soot, dust, and dusty texture; old sides of boats, weedy roadside vegetation, dunghills, straw-yards, and all the soilings and stains of every common labor.

And more than this, he not only could endure, but enjoyed and looked for *litter*, like Covent Garden wreck after the market. His pictures are often full of it, from side to side; their foregrounds differ from all others in the natural way that things have of lying about in them. Even his richest vegetation, in ideal work, is confused; and he delights in shingle, débris, and heaps of fallen stones. The last words he ever spoke to me about a picture were in gentle exaltation about his St. Gothard: "that *litter* of stones which I endeavored to represent."

§ 7. The second great result of this Covent Garden training was, understanding of and regard for the poor, whom the Venetians, we saw, despised; whom, contrarily, Turner loved, and more than loved — understood. He got no romantic sight of them, but an infallible one, as he prowled about the end of his lane, watching night effects in the wintry streets; nor sight

of the poor alone, but of the poor in direct relations with the rich. He knew, in good and evil, what both classes thought of, and how they dwelt with, each other.

Reynolds and Gainsborough, bred in country villages, learned there the country boy's reverential theory of "the squire," and kept it. They painted the squire and the squire's lady as centres of the movements of the universe, to the end of their lives. But Turner perceived the younger squire in other aspects about his lane, occurring prominently in its night scenery, as a dark figure, or one of two, against the moonlight. He saw also the working of city commerce, from endless warehouse, towering over Thames, to the back shop in the lane, with its stale herrings — highly interesting these last; one of his father's best friends, whom he often afterwards visited affectionately at Bristol, being a fishmonger and glueboiler; which gives us a friendly turn of mind towards herring-fishing, whaling, Calais poissardes, and many other of our choicest subjects in after life; all this being connected with that mysterious forest below London Bridge on one side; — and, on the other, with these masses of human power and national wealth which weigh upon us, at Covent Garden here, with strange compression, and crush us into narrow Hand Court.

§ 8. "That mysterious forest below London

Bridge"—better for the boy than wood of pine, or grove of myrtle. How he must have tormented the watermen, beseeching them to let him crouch anywhere in the bows, quiet as a log, so only that he might get floated down there among the ships, and round and round the ships, and with the ships, and by the ships, and under the ships, staring and clambering;—these the only quite beautiful things he can see in all the world, except the sky; but these, when the sun is on their sails, filling or falling, endlessly disordered by sway of tide and stress of anchorage, beautiful unspeakably; which ships also are inhabited by glorious creatures—red-faced sailors, with pipes, appearing over the gunwales, true knights, over their castle parapets—the most angelic beings in the whole compass of London world. And Trafalgar happening long before we can draw ships, we, nevertheless, coax all current stories out of the wounded sailors, do our best at present to show Nelson's funeral streaming up the Thames; and vow that Trafalgar shall have its tribute of memory some day. Which, accordingly, is accomplished—once, with all our might, for its death; twice, with all our might, for its victory; thrice, in pensive farewell to the old Temeraire, and, with it, to that order of things.

§ 9. Now this fond companying with sailors

must have divided his time, it appears to me, pretty equally between Covent Garden and Wapping (allowing for incidental excursions to Chelsea on one side, and Greenwich on the other), which time he would spend pleasantly, but not magnificently, being limited in pocket-money, and leading a kind of "Poor-Jack" life on the river.

In some respects, no life could be better for a lad. But it was not calculated to make his ear fine to the niceties of language, nor form his moralities on an entirely regular standard. Picking up his first scraps of vigorous English chiefly at Deptford and in the markets, and his first ideas of female tenderness and beauty among nymphs of the barge and the barrow,—another boy might, perhaps, have become what people usually term "vulgar." But the original make and frame of Turner's mind being not vulgar, but as nearly as possible a combination of the minds of Keats and Dante, joining capricious waywardness, and intense openness to every fine pleasure of sense, and hot defiance of formal precedent, with a quite infinite tenderness, generosity, and desire of justice and truth — this kind of mind did not become vulgar, but very tolerant of vulgarity, even fond of it in some forms; and, on the outside, visibly infected by it, deeply enough; the curious result, in its combination of elements, being to most

people wholly incomprehensible. It was as if a cable had been woven of blood-crimson silk, and then tarred on the outside. People handled it, and the tar came off on their hands; red gleams were seen through the black, underneath, at the places where it had been strained. Was it ochre?—said the world—or red lead?

§ 10. Schooled thus in manners, literature, and general moral principles at Chelsea and Wapping, we have finally to inquire concerning the most important point of all. We have seen the principal differences between this boy and Giorgione, as respects sight of the beautiful, understanding of poverty, of commerce, and of order of battle; then follows another cause of difference in our training—not slight,—the aspect of religion, namely, in the neighborhood of Covent Garden. I say the aspect; for that was all the lad could judge by. Disposed, for the most part, to learn chiefly by his eyes, in this special matter he finds there is really no other way of learning. His father taught him "to lay one penny upon another." Of mother's teaching, we hear of none; of parish pastoral teaching, the reader may guess how much.

§ 11. I chose Giorgione rather than Veronese to help me in carrying out this parallel; because I do not find in Giorgione's work any of the early Venetian monarchist element. He seems to me to have belonged more to an abstract

contemplative school. I may be wrong in this; it is no matter;—suppose it were so, and that he came down to Venice somewhat recusant, or insentient, concerning the usual priestly doctrines of his day,—how would the Venetian religion, from an outer intellectual standing-point, have *looked* to him?

§ 12. He would have seen it to be a religion indisputably powerful in human affairs; often very harmfully so; sometimes devouring widows' houses, and consuming the strongest and fairest from among the young; freezing into merciless bigotry the policy of the old: also, on the other hand, animating national courage, and raising souls, otherwise sordid, into heroism: on the whole, always a real and great power; served with daily sacrifice of gold, time, and thought; putting forth its claims, if hypocritically, at least in bold hypocrisy, not waiving any atom of them in doubt or fear; and, assuredly, in large measure, sincere, believing in itself, and believed: a goodly system, moreover, in aspect; gorgeous, harmonious, mysterious;—a thing which had either to be obeyed or combated, but could not be scorned. A religion towering over all the city—many-buttressed—luminous in marble stateliness, as the dome of our Lady of Safety shines over the sea; many-voiced also, giving, over all the eastern seas, to the sentinel his watchword, to the soldier his war-cry; and, on

the lips of all who died for Venice, shaping the whisper of death.

§ 13. I suppose the boy Turner to have regarded the religion of his city also from an external intellectual standing-point.

What did he see in Maiden Lane?

Let not the reader be offended with me; I am willing to let him describe, at his own pleasure, what Turner saw there; but to me, it seems to have been this. A religion maintained occasionally, even the whole length of the lane, at point of constable's staff; but, at other times, placed under the custody of the beadle, within certain black and unstately iron railings of St. Paul's, Covent Garden. Among the wheelbarrows and over the vegetables, no perceptible dominance of religion; in the narrow, disquieted streets, none; in the tongues, deeds, daily ways of Maiden Lane, little. Some honesty, indeed, and English industry, and kindness of heart, and general idea of justice; but faith, of any national kind, shut up from one Sunday to the next, not artistically beautiful even in those Sabbatical exhibitions; its paraphernalia being chiefly of high pews, heavy elocution, and cold grimness of behavior.

What chiaroscuro belongs to it — (dependent mostly on candlelight),— we will, however, draw considerately; no goodliness of escutcheon, nor other respectability being omitted, and the

best of their results confessed, a meek old woman and a child being let into a pew, for whom the reading by candlelight will be beneficial.*

§ 14. For the rest, this religion seems to him discreditable — discredited — not believing in itself, putting forth its authority in a cowardly way, watching how far it might be tolerated, continually shrinking, disclaiming, fencing, finessing; divided against itself, not by stormy rents, but by thin fissures, and splittings of plaster from the walls. Not to be either obeyed, or combated, by an ignorant, yet clear-sighted youth; only to be scorned. And scorned not one whit the less, though also the dome dedicated to *it* looms high over distant winding of the Thames; as St. Mark's campanile rose, for goodly landmark, over mirage of lagoon. For St. Mark ruled over life; the Saint of London over death; St. Mark over St. Mark's Place, but St. Paul over St. Paul's Churchyard.

§ 15. Under these influences pass away the first reflective hours of life, with such conclusion as they can reach. In consequence of a fit of illness, he was taken — I cannot ascertain in what year — to live with an aunt, at Brentford; and here, I believe, received some schooling,

* Liber Studiorum. "Interior of a church." It is worthy of remark that Giorgione and Titian are always delighted to have an opportunity of drawing priests. The English Church may, perhaps, accept it as matter of congratulation that this is the only instance in which Turner drew a clergyman.

which he seems to have snatched vigorously; getting knowledge, at least by translation, of the more picturesque classical authors, which he turned presently to use, as we shall see. Hence also, walks about Putney and Twickenham in the summer time acquainted him with the look of English meadow-ground in its restricted states of paddock and park; and with some round-headed appearances of trees, and stately entrances to houses of mark: the avenue at Bushy, and the iron gates and carved pillars of Hampton, impressing him apparently with great awe and admiration; so that in after life his little country house is,— of all places in the world,— at Twickenham! Of swans and reedy shores he now learns the soft motion and the green mystery, in a way not to be forgotten.

§ 16. And at last fortune wills that the lad's true life shall begin; and one summer's evening, after various wonderful stage-coach experiences on the north road, which gave him a love of stage-coaches ever after, he finds himself sitting alone among the Yorkshire hills.* For the first time, the silence of Nature round him, her freedom sealed to him, her glory opened to him. Peace at last; no roll of cart-wheel, nor

* I do not mean that this is his first acquaintance with the country, but the first impressive and touching one, after his mind was formed. The earliest sketches I found in the National Collection are at Clifton and Bristol; the next, at Oxford.

mutter of sullen voices in the back shop; but curlew-cry in space of heaven, and welling of bell-toned streamlet by its shadowy rock. Freedom at last. Dead-wall, dark railing, fenced field, gated garden, all passed away like the dream of a prisoner; and behold, far as foot or eye can race or range, the moor, and cloud. Loveliness at last. It is here then, among these deserted vales! Not among men. Those pale, poverty-struck, or cruel faces;—that multitudinous, marred humanity—are not the only things that God has made. Here is something He has made which no one has marred. Pride of purple rocks, and river pools of blue, and tender wilderness of glittering trees, and misty lights of evening on immeasurable hills.

§ 17. Beauty, and freedom, and peace; and yet another teacher, graver than these. Sound preaching at last here, in Kirkstall crypt, concerning fate and life. Here, where the dark pool reflects the chancel pillars, and the cattle lie in unhindered rest, the soft sunshine on their dappled bodies, instead of priests' vestments; their white furry hair ruffled a little, fitfully, by the evening wind, deep-scented from the meadow thyme.

§ 18. Consider deeply the import to him of this, his first sight of ruin, and compare it with the effect of the architecture that was around Giorgione. There were indeed aged buildings,

at Venice, in his time, but none in decay. All ruin was removed, and its place filled as quickly as in our London; but filled always by architecture loftier and more wonderful than that whose place it took, the boy himself happy to work upon the walls of it; so that the idea of the passing away of the strength of men and beauty of their works never could occur to him sternly. Brighter and brighter the cities of Italy had been rising and broadening on hill and plain, for three hundred years. He saw only strength and immortality, could not but paint both; conceived the form of man as deathless, calm with power, and fiery with life.

§ 19. Turner saw the exact reverse of this. In the present work of men, meanness, aimlessness, unsightliness: thin-walled, lath-divided, narrow-garreted houses of clay; booths of a darksome Vanity Fair, busily base.

But on Whitby Hill, and by Bolton Brook, remained traces of other handiwork. Men who could build had been there; and who also had wrought, not merely for their own days. But to what purpose? Strong faith, and steady hands, and patient souls — can this, then, be all you have left! this the sum of your doing on the earth! — a nest whence the night-owl may whimper to the brook, and a ribbed skeleton of consumed arches, looming above the bleak banks of mist, from its cliff to the sea?

As the strength of men to Giorgione, to Turner their weakness and vileness, were alone visible. They themselves, unworthy or ephemeral; their work, despicable, or decayed. In the Venetian's eyes, all beauty depended on man's presence and pride; in Turner's, on the solitude he had left, and the humiliation he had suffered.

§ 20. And thus the fate and issue of all his work were determined at once. He must be a painter of the strength of nature, there was no beauty elsewhere than in that; he must paint also the labor and sorrow and passing away of men; this was the great human truth visible to him.

Their labor, their sorrow, and their death. Mark the three. Labor; by sea and land, in field and city, at forge and furnace, helm and plough. No pastoral indolence nor classic pride shall stand between him and the troubling of the world; still less between him and the toil of his country,—blind, tormented, unwearied, marvellous England.

§ 21. Also their Sorrow; Ruin of all their glorious work, passing away of their thoughts and their honor, mirage of pleasure, FALLACY OF HOPE; gathering of weed on temple step; gaining of wave on deserted strand; weeping of the mother for the children, desolate by her breathless first-born in the streets of the city,*

* "The Tenth Plague of Egypt."

desolate by her last sons slain, among the beasts of the field.*

§ 22. And their Death. That old Greek question again;— yet unanswered. The unconquerable spectre still flitting among the forest trees at twilight; rising ribbed out of the sea-sand;— white, a strange Aphrodite,— out of the sea-foam; stretching its gray, cloven wings among the clouds; turning the light of their sunsets into blood. This has to be looked upon, and in a more terrible shape than ever Salvator or Durer saw it. The wreck of one guilty country does not infer the ruin of all countries, and need not cause general terror respecting the laws of the universe. Neither did the orderly and narrow succession of domestic joy and sorrow in a small German community bring the question in its breadth, or in any unresolvable shape, before the mind of Durer. But the English death — the European death of the nineteenth century — was of another range and power; more terrible a thousand-fold in its merely physical grasp and grief; more terrible, incalculably, in its mystery and shame. What were the robber's casual pang, or the rage of the flying skirmish, compared to the work of the axe, and the sword, and the famine, which was done during this man's youth on all the hills and plains of the Christian earth, from

* "Rizpah, the Daughter of Aiah."

Moscow to Gibraltar? He was eighteen years old when Napoleon came down on Arcola. Look on the map of Europe, and count the blood-stains on it, between Arcola and Waterloo.

§ 23. Not alone those blood-stains on the Alpine snow, and the blue of the Lombard plain. The English death was before his eyes also. No decent, calculable, consoled dying; no passing to rest like that of the aged burghers of Nuremberg town. No gentle processions to churchyards among the fields, the bronze crests bossed deep on the memorial tablets, and the skylark singing above them from among the corn. But the life trampled out in the slime of the street, crushed to dust amidst the roaring of the wheel, tossed countlessly away into howling winter wind along five hundred leagues of rock-fanged shore. Or, worst of all, rotted down to forgotten graves through years of ignorant patience, and vain seeking for help from man, for hope in God — infirm, imperfect yearning, as of motherless infants starving at the dawn; oppressed royalties of captive thought, vague ague-fits of bleak, amazed despair.

§ 24. A goodly landscape this, for the lad to paint, and under a goodly light. Wide enough the light was, and clear; no more Salvator's lurid chasm on jagged horizon, nor Durer's spotted rest of sunny gleam on hedgerow and field; but light over all the world. Full shone

now its awful globe, one pallid charnel-house,— a ball strewn bright with human ashes, glaring in poised sway beneath the sun, all blinding-white with death from pole to pole,— death, not of myriads of poor bodies only, but of will, and mercy, and conscience; death, not once inflicted on the flesh, but daily, fastening on the spirit; death, not silent or patient, waiting his appointed hour, but voiceful, venomous; death with the taunting word, and burning grasp, and infixed sting.

"Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe." The word is spoken in our ears continually to other reapers than the angels — to the busy skeletons that never tire for stooping. When the measure of iniquity is full, and it seems that another day might bring repentance and redemption,— "Put ye in the sickle." When the young life has been wasted all away, and the eyes are just opening upon the tracks of ruin, and faint resolution rising in the heart for nobler things,— "Put ye in the sickle." When the roughest blows of fortune have been borne long and bravely, and the hand is just stretched to grasp its goal,— "Put ye in the sickle." And when there are but a few in the midst of a nation, to save it, or to teach, or to cherish; and all its life is bound up in those few golden ears,— "Put ye in the sickle, pale reapers, and pour hemlock for your feast of harvest home."

This was the sight which opened on the young eyes, this the watchword sounding within the heart of Turner in his youth.

So taught, and prepared for his life's labor, sate the boy at last alone among his fair English hills; and began to paint, with cautious toil, the rocks, and fields, and trickling brooks, and soft, white clouds of heaven.

The Slave Ship

The Slave Ship

MODERN PAINTERS, PART II, SECT. V, CHAP. III.

BUT, I think, the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of the Slave Ship, the chief Academy picture of the Exhibition of 1840. It is a sunset on the Atlantic after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges, the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendor which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley, the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly

divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamp-like fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty* ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, — and cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.

I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should

*She is a slaver, throwing her slaves overboard. The near sea is encumbered with corpses.

choose this. Its daring conception — ideal in the highest sense of the word — is based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life; its color is absolutely perfect, not one false or morbid hue in any part or line, and so modulated that every square inch of canvas is a perfect composition; its drawing as accurate as fearless; the ship buoyant, bending, and full of motion; its tones as true as they are wonderful; and the whole picture dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions — (completing thus the perfect system of all truth, which we have shown to be formed by Turner's works) — the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable Sea.

The Mountain Gloom

The Mountain Gloom

MODERN PAINTERS, PART V, CHAP. XIX.

§ 1. WE have now cursorily glanced over those conditions of mountain structure which appear constant in duration, and universal in extent; and we have found them, invariably, calculated for the delight, the advantage, or the teaching of men; prepared, it seems, so as to contain, alike in fortitude or feebleness, in timeliness or in terror, some beneficence of gift, or profoundness of counsel. We have found that where at first all seemed disturbed and accidental, the most tender laws were appointed to produce forms of perpetual beauty; and that where to the careless or cold observer it seemed severe or purposeless, the well-being of man has been chiefly consulted, and his rightly directed powers, and sincerely awakened intelligence, may find wealth in every falling rock, and wisdom in every talking wave.

It remains for us to consider what actual effect upon the human race has been produced by

the generosity, or the instruction of the hills; how far, in past ages, they have been thanked, or listened to; how far, in coming ages, it may be well for us to accept them for tutors, or acknowledge them for friends.

§ 2. What they have already taught us may, one would think, be best discerned in the midst of them,— in some place where they have had their own way with the human soul; where no veil has been drawn between it and them, no contradicting voice has confused their ministries of sound, or broken their pathos of silence: where war has never streaked their streams with bloody foam, nor ambition sought for other throne than their cloud-courtiered pinnacles, not avarice for other treasure than, year by year, is given to their unlaborious rocks, in budded jewels, and mossy gold.

§ 3. I do not know any district possessing more pure or uninterrupted fulness of mountain character (and that of the highest order), or which appears to have been less disturbed by foreign agencies, than that which borders the course of the Trient between Valorsine and Martigny. The paths which lead to it out of the valley of the Rhone, rising at first in steep circles among the walnut trees, like winding stairs among the pillars of a Gothic tower, retire over the shoulders of the hills into a valley almost unknown, but thickly inhabited by an indus-

trious and patient population. Along the ridges of the rocks, smoothed by old glaciers into long, dark, billowy swellings, like the backs of plunging dolphins, the peasant watches the slow coloring of the tufts of moss and roots of herb which, little by little, gather a feeble soil over the iron substance; then, supporting the narrow strip of clinging ground with a few stones, he subdues it to the spade; and in a year or two a little crest of corn is seen waving upon the rocky casque. The irregular meadows run in and out like inlets of lake among these harvested rocks, sweet with perpetual streamlets, that seem always to have chosen the steepest places to come down, for the sake of the leaps, scattering their handfuls of crystal this way and that, as the wind takes them, with all the grace, but with none of the formalism, of fountains; dividing into fanciful change of dash and spring, yet with the seal of their granite channels upon them, as the lightest play of human speech may bear the seal of past toil, and closing back out of their spray to lave the rigid angles, and brighten with silver fringes and glassy films each lower and lower step of sable stone; until at last, gathered altogether again,—except, perhaps, some chance drops caught on the apple-blossom, where it has budded a little nearer the cascade than it did last spring,—they find their way down to the turf, and lose themselves

in that silently; with quiet depth of clear water furrowing among the grass blades, and looking only like their shadow, but presently emerging again in little startled gushes and laughing hurries, as if they had remembered suddenly that the day was too short for them to get down the hill.

Green field, and glowing rock, and glancing streamlet, all slope together in the sunshine towards the brows of the ravines, where the pines take up their own dominion of saddened shade; and with everlasting roar in the twilight, the stronger torrents thunder down pale from the glaciers, filling all their chasms with enchanted gold, beating themselves to pieces against the great rocks that they have themselves cast down, and forcing fierce way beneath their ghastly poise.

The mountain paths stoop to these glens in forky zigzags, leading to some grey and narrow arch, all fringed under its shuddering curve with the ferns that fear the light; a cross of rough-hewn pine, iron-bound to its parapet, standing dark against the lurid fury of the foam. Far up the glen, as we pause beside the cross, the sky is seen through the openings in the pines, thin with excess of light; and, in its clear, consuming flame of white space, the summits of the rocky mountains are gathered into solemn crowns and circlets, all flushed in that

strange, faint silence of possession by the sunshine which has in it so deep a melancholy; full of power, yet as frail as shadows; lifeless, like the walls of a sepulchre, yet beautiful in tender fall of crimson folds, like the veil of some sea spirit, that lives and dies as the foam flashes; fixed on a perpetual throne, stern against all strength, lifted above all sorrow, and yet effaced and melted utterly into the air by that last sunbeam that has crossed to them from between the two golden clouds.

§ 4. High above all sorrow: yes; but not unwitnessing to it. The traveller on his happy journey, as his foot springs from the deep turf and strikes the pebbles gayly over the edge of the mountain road, sees with a glance of delight the clusters of nut-brown cottages that nestle among those sloping orchards, and glow beneath the boughs of the pines. Here, it may well seem to him, if there be sometimes hardship, there must be at least innocence and peace, and fellowship of the human soul with nature. It is not so. The wild goats that leap along those rocks have as much passion of joy in all that fair work of God as the men that toil among them. Perhaps more. Enter the street of one of those villages, and you will find it foul with that gloomy foulness that is suffered only by torpor, or by anguish of soul. Here, it is torpor — not absolute suffering, — not starvation

or disease, but darkness of calm enduring; the spring known only as the time of the scythe, and the autumn as the time of the sickle, and the sun only as a warmth, the wind as a chill, and the mountains as a danger. They do not understand so much as the name of beauty, or of knowledge. They understand dimly that of virtue. Love, patience, hospitality, faith,—these things they know. To glean their meadows side by side, so happier; to bear the burden up the breathless mountain flank, unmurmuringly; to bid the stranger drink from their vessel of milk; to see at the foot of their low deathbeds a pale figure upon a cross, dying also, patiently;—in this they are different from the cattle and from the stones, but in all this unrewarded as far as concerns the present life. For them, there is neither hope nor passion of spirit; for them neither advance nor exultation. Black bread, rude roof, dark night, laborious day, weary arm at sunset; and life ebbs away. No books, no thoughts, no attainments, no rest; except only sometimes a little sitting in the sun under the church wall, as the bell tolls thin and far in the mountain air; a pattering of a few prayers, not understood, by the altar rails of the dimly gilded chapel, and so back to the sombre home, with the cloud upon them still unbroken—that cloud of rocky gloom, born out of the wild torrents and ruinous stones, and

unlightened, even in their religion, except by the vague promise of some better thing unknown, mingled with threatening, and obscured by an unspeakable horror,—a smoke, as it were, of martyrdom, coiling up with the incense, and, amidst the images of tortured bodies and lamenting spirits in hurtling flames, the very cross, for them, dashed more deeply than for others, with gouts of blood.

§ 5. Do not let this be thought a darkened picture of the life of these mountaineers. It is literal fact. No contrast can be more painful than that between the dwelling of any well-conducted English cottager, and that of the equally honest Savoyard. The one, set in the midst of its dull flat fields and uninteresting hedgerows, shows in itself the love of brightness and beauty; its daisy-studded garden beds, its smoothly swept brick path to the threshold, its freshly sanded floor and orderly shelves of household furniture, all testify to energy of heart, and happiness in the simple course and simple possessions of daily life. The other cottage, in the midst of an inconceivable, inexpressible beauty, set on some sloping bank of golden sward, with clear fountains flowing beside it, and wild flowers, and noble trees, and goodly rocks gathered round into a perfection as of Paradise, is itself a dark and plague-like stain in the midst of the gentle land-

scape. Within a certain distance of its threshold the ground is foul and cattle-trampled; its timbers are black with smoke, its garden choked with weeds and nameless refuse, its chambers empty and joyless, the light and wind gleaming and filtering through the crannies of their stones. All testifies that to its inhabitant the world is labor and vanity; that for him neither flowers bloom, nor birds sing, nor fountains glisten; and that his soul hardly differs from the grey cloud that coils and dies upon his hills; except in having no fold of it touched by the sunbeams.

§ 6. Is it not strange to reflect, that hardly an evening passes in London or Paris but one of those cottages is painted for the better amusement of the fair and idle, and shaded with pasteboard pines by the scene-shifter; and that good and kind people,— poetically minded,— delight themselves in imagining the happy life led by peasants who dwell by Alpine fountains, and kneel to crosses upon peaks of rock? that nightly we lay down our gold to fashion forth simulacra of peasants, in gay ribands and white bodices, singing sweet songs, and bowing gracefully to the picturesque crosses; and all the while the veritable peasants are kneeling, songlessly, to veritable crosses, in another temper than the kind and fair audiences dream of, and assuredly with another kind of answer than is got out of the opera

catastrophe; an answer having reference, it may be, in dim futurity, to those very audiences themselves? If all the gold that has gone to paint the simulacra of the cottages, and to put new songs in the mouths of the simulacra of the peasants, had gone to brighten the existent cottages, and to put new songs into the mouths of the existent peasants, it might in the end, perhaps, have turned out better so, not only for the peasants, but for even the audience. For that form of the False Ideal has also its correspondent True Ideal,—consisting not in the naked beauty of statues, nor in the gauze flowers and crackling tinsel of theatres, but in the clothed and fed beauty of living men, and in the lights and laughs of happy homes. Night after night, the desire of such an ideal springs up in every idle human heart; and night after night, as far as idleness can, we work out this desire in costly lies. We paint the faded actress, build the lath landscape, feed our benevolence with fallacies of felicity, and satisfy our righteousness with poetry of justice. The time will come when, as the heavy-folded curtain falls upon our own stage of life, we shall begin to comprehend that the justice we loved was intended to have been done in fact, and not in poetry, and the felicity we sympathized in, to have been bestowed and not feigned. We talk much of money's worth, yet perhaps may one

day be surprised to find that what the wise and charitable European public gave to one night's rehearsal of hypocrisy,— to one hour's pleasant warbling of Linda or Lucia,— would have filled a whole Alpine Valley with happiness, and poured the waves of harvest over the famine of many a Lammermoor.

§ 7. "Nay," perhaps the reader answers, "it is vain to hope that this could ever be. The perfect beauty of the ideal must always be fictitious. It is rational to amuse ourselves with the fair imagination; but it would be madness to endeavor to put it into practice, in the face of the ordinances of Nature. Real shepherdesses must always be rude, and real peasants miserable; suffer us to turn away our gentle eyes from their coarseness and their pain, and to seek comfort in cultivated voices and purchased smiles. We cannot hew down the rocks, nor turn the sands of the torrent into gold."

§ 8. This is no answer. Be assured of the great truth — that what is impossible in reality is ridiculous in fancy. If it is not in the nature of things that peasants should be gentle and happy, then the imagination of such peasantry is ridiculous, and to delight in such imagination wrong; as delight in any kind of falsehood is always. But if in the nature of things it be possible that among the wildness of hills the human heart should be refined, and if the com-

fort of dress, and the gentleness of language, and the joy of progress in knowledge, and of variety in thought, are possible to the mountaineer in his true existence, let us strive to write this true poetry upon the rocks before we indulge it in our visions, and try whether, among all the fine arts, one of the finest be not that of painting cheeks with health rather than rouge.

§ 9. "But is such refinement possible? Do not the conditions of the mountain peasant's life, in the plurality of instances, necessarily forbid it?"

As bearing sternly on this question, it is necessary to examine one peculiarity of feeling which manifests itself among the European nations, so far as I have noticed, irregularly,—appearing sometimes to be the characteristic of a particular time, sometimes of a particular race, sometimes of a particular locality, and to involve at once much that is to be blamed and much that is praiseworthy. I mean the capability of enduring, or even delighting in, the contemplation of objects of terror — a sentiment which especially influences the temper of some groups of mountaineers, and of which it is necessary to examine the causes, before we can form any conjecture whatever as to the real effect of mountains on human character.

§ 10. For instance, the unhappy alterations which have lately taken place in the town of Lucerne have still spared two of its ancient bridges; both of which, being long covered walks, appear, in past times, to have been to the population of the town what the Mall was to London, or the Gardens of the Tuileries are to Paris. For the continual contemplation of those who sauntered from pier to pier, pictures were painted on the woodwork of the roof. These pictures, in the one bridge, represent all the important Swiss battles and victories; in the other they are the well-known series of which Longfellow has made so beautiful a use in the Golden Legend, the *Dance of Death*.

Imagine the countenances with which a committee, appointed for the establishment of a new "promenade" in some flourishing modern town, would receive a proposal to adorn such promenade with pictures of the Dance of Death.

§ 11. Now just so far as the old bridge at Lucerne, with the pure, deep, and blue water of the Reuss eddying down between its piers, and with the sweet darkness of green hills, and far-away gleaming of lake and Alps alternating upon the eye on either side; and the gloomy lesson frowning in the shadow, as if the deep tone of a passing-bell, overhead, were mingling for ever with the plashing of the river as it glides by beneath; just so far, I say, as this differs

from the straight and smooth strip of level dust, between two rows of round-topped acacia trees, wherein the inhabitants of an English watering-place or French fortified town take their delight,—so far I believe the life of the old Lucernois, with all its happy waves of light, and mountain strength of will, and solemn expectation of eternity, to have differed from the generality of the lives of those who saunter for their habitual hour up and down the modern promenade. But the gloom is not always of this noble kind. As we penetrate farther among the hills we shall find it becoming very painful. We are walking, perhaps, in a summer afternoon, up the valley of Zermatt (a German valley), the sun shining brightly on grassy knolls and through fringes of pines, the goats leaping happily, and the cattle bells ringing sweetly, and the snowy mountains shining like heavenly castles far above. We see, a little way off, a small white chapel, sheltered behind one of the flowery hillocks of mountain turf; and we approach its little window, thinking to look through it into some quiet home of prayer; but the window is grated with iron, and open to the winds, and when we look through it, behold — a heap of white human bones mouldering into whiter dust!

So also in that same sweet valley, of which I have just been speaking, between Chamouni

and the Valais, at every turn of the pleasant pathway, where the scent of the thyme lies richest upon its rocks, we shall see a little cross and shrine set under one of them; and go up to it, hoping to receive some happy thought of the Redeemer, by whom all these lovely things were made, and still consist. But when we come near — behold, beneath the cross, a rude picture of souls tormented in red tongues of hell fire, and pierced by demons.

§ 12. As we pass towards Italy the appearance of this gloom deepens; and when we descend the southern slope of the Alps we shall find this bringing forward of the image of Death associated with an endurance of the most painful aspects of disease, so that conditions of human suffering, which in any other country would be confined in hospitals, are permitted to be openly exhibited by the wayside; and with this exposure of the degraded human form is farther connected an insensibility to ugliness and imperfection in other things; so that the ruined wall, neglected garden, and uncleansed chamber, seem to unite in expressing a gloom of spirit possessing the inhabitants of the whole land. It does not appear to arise from poverty, nor careless contentment with little: there is here nothing of Irish recklessness or humor; but there seems a settled obscurity in the soul,— a chill and plague, as if risen out of a sepulchre,

which partly deadens, partly darkens, the eyes and hearts of men, and breathes a leprosy of decay through every breeze and every stone. "Instead of well-set hair, baldness, and burning instead of beauty."

Nor are definite proofs wanting that the feeling is independent of mere poverty or indolence. In the most gorgeous and costly palace garden the statues will be found green with moss, the terraces defaced or broken; the palace itself partly coated with marble, is left in other places rough with cementless and jagged brick, its iron balconies bent and rusted, its pavements overgrown with grass. The more energetic the effort has been to recover from this state, and to shake off all appearance of poverty, the more assuredly the curse seems to fasten on the scene, and the unslaked mortar, and unfinished wall, and ghastly desolation of incompleteness entangled in decay, strike a deeper despondency into the beholder.

§ 13. The feeling would be also more easily accounted for if it appeared consistent in its regardlessness of beauty,— if what was *done* were altogether as inefficient as what was deserted. But the balcony, though rusty and broken, is delicate in design, and supported on a nobly carved slab of marble; the window, though a mere black rent in ragged plaster, is encircled by a garland of vine and fronted by a thicket

of the sharp leaves and aurora-colored flowers of the oleander; the courtyard, overgrown by mournful grass, is terminated by a bright fresco of gardens and fountains; the corpse, borne with the bare face to heaven, is strewn with flowers; beauty is continually mingled with the shadow of death.

§ 14. So also is a kind of merriment,—not true cheerfulness, neither careless nor idle jesting, but a determined effort at gaiety, a resolute laughter, mixed with much satire, grossness, and practical buffoonery, and, it always seemed to me, void of all comfort or hope,—with this eminent character in it also, that it is capable of touching with its bitterness even the most fearful subjects, so that as the love of beauty retains its tenderness in the presence of death, this love of jest also retains its boldness, and the skeleton becomes one of the standard masques of the Italian comedy. When I was in Venice, in 1850, the most popular piece of the *comic* opera was "Death and the Cobbler," in which the point of the plot was the success of a village cobbler as a physician, in consequence of the appearance of Death to him beside the bed of every patient who was not to recover; and the most applauded scene in it was one in which the physician, insolent in success, and swollen with luxury, was himself taken down into the abode of Death, and thrown into an agony

of terror by being shown lives of men, under the form of wasting lamps, and his own ready to expire.

§ 15. I have also not the smallest doubt that this endurance or affronting of fearful images is partly associated with indecency, partly with general fatuity and weakness of mind. The men who applauded loudest when the actress put on, in an instant, her mask representing a skull, and when her sharp and clear "Sono la Morte" rang through the theatre, were just those whose disgusting habits rendered it impossible for women to pass through some of the principal streets in Venice,—just those who formed the gaping audience, when a mountebank offered a new quack medicine on the Riva dei Schiavoni. And, as fearful imagery is associated with the weakness of fever, so it seems to me that imbecility and love of terror are connected by a mysterious link throughout the whole life of man. There is a most touching instance of this in the last days of Sir Walter Scott, the publication of whose latter works, deeply to be regretted on many accounts, was yet, perhaps, on the whole, right, as affording a means of studying the conditions of the decay of overwrought human intellect in one of the most noble of minds. Among the many signs of this decay at its uttermost, in Castle Dangerous, not one of the least notable was the intro-

duction of the knight who bears on his black armor the likeness of a skeleton.

§ 16. The love of horror which is in this manner connected with feebleness of intellect, is not, however, to be confounded with that shown by the vulgar in general. The feeling which is calculated upon in the preparation of pieces full of terror and crime, at our lower theatres, and which is fed with greater art and elegance in the darker scenery of the popular French novelists, however morally unhealthy, is not *unnatural;* it is not the result of an apathy to such horror, but of a strong desire for excitement in minds coarse and dull, but not necessarily feeble. The scene of the murder of the jeweller in the "Count of Monte Cristo," or those with the Squelette in the "Mystères de Paris," appeal to instincts which are as common to all mankind as those of thirst and hunger, and which are only debasing in the exaggerated condition consequent upon the dulness of other instincts higher than they. And the persons who, at one period of their life, might take chief pleasure in such narrations, at another may be brought into a temper of high tone and acute sensibility. But the love of horror respecting which we are now inquiring appears to be an unnatural and feeble feeling; it is not that the person needs excitement, or has any such strong perceptions as would cause excite-

ment, but he is dead to the horror, and a strange evil influence guides his feebleness of mind rather to fearful images than to beautiful ones,— as our disturbed dreams are sometimes filled with ghastliness which seem not to arise out of any conceivable association of our waking ideas, but to be a vapor out of the very chambers of the tomb, to which the mind, in its palsy, has approached.

§ 17. But even this imbecile revelling in terror is more comprehensible, more apparently natural, than the instinct which is found frequently connected with it, of absolute joy in *ugliness*. In some conditions of old German art we find the most singular insisting upon what is in all respects ugly and abortive, or frightful; not with any sense of sublimity in it, neither in mere foolishness, but with a resolute choice, such as I can completely account for on no acknowledged principle of human nature. For in the worst conditions of sensuality there is yet some perception of the beautiful, so that men utterly depraved in principle and habits of thought will yet admire beautiful things and fair faces. But in the temper of which I am now speaking there is no preference even of the lower forms of loveliness; no effort at painting fair limbs or passionate faces, no evidence of any human or natural sensation,— a mere feeding on decay and rolling in slime, not appar-

ently or conceivably with any pleasure in it, but under some fearful possession of an evil spirit.

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It seems one of the most cunning and frequent of self-deceptions to turn the heart away from this warning and refuse to acknowledge anything in the fair scenes of the natural creation but beneficence. Men in general lean towards the light, so far as they contemplate such things at all, most of them passing "by on the other side," either in mere plodding pursuit of their own work, irrespective of what good or evil is around them, or else in selfish gloom, or selfish delight, resulting from their own circumstances at the moment. Of those who give themselves to any true contemplation, the plurality, being humble, gentle, and kindly hearted, look only in nature for what is lovely and kind; partly, also, God gives the disposition to every healthy human mind in some degree to pass over or even harden itself against evil things, else the suffering would be too great to be borne; and humble people, with a quiet trust that everything is for the best, do not fairly represent the facts to themselves, thinking them none of their business. So, what between hard-hearted people, thoughtless people, busy people, humble people, and cheerfully minded people,— giddiness of youth, and

preoccupations of age,—philosophies of faith, and cruelties of folly,—priest and Levite, masquer and merchantman, all agreeing to keep their own side of the way,—the evil that God sends to warn us gets to be forgotten, and the evil that He sends to be mended by us gets left unmended. And then, because people shut their eyes to the dark indisputableness of the facts in front of them, their Faith, such as it is, is shaken or uprooted by every darkness in what is revealed to them. In the present day it is not easy to find a well-meaning man among our more earnest thinkers, who will not take upon himself to dispute the whole system of redemption, because he cannot unravel the mystery of the punishment of sin. But can he unravel the mystery of the punishment of NO sin? Can he entirely account for all that happens to a cab-horse? Has he ever looked fairly at the fate of one of those beasts as it is dying,—measured the work it has done, and the reward it has got,—put his hand upon the bloody wounds through which its bones are piercing, and so looked up to Heaven with an entire understanding of Heaven's ways about the horse? Yet the horse is a fact—no dream—no revelation among the myrtle trees by night; and the dust it dies upon, and the dogs that eat it, are facts;—and yonder happy person, whose the horse was till its knees were broken over the

hurdles, who had an immortal soul to begin with, and wealth and peace to help forward his immortality; who has also devoted the powers of his soul, and body, and wealth, and peace, to the spoiling of houses, the corruption of the innocent, and the oppression of the poor; and has, at this actual moment of his prosperous life, as many curses waiting round about him in calm shadow, with their death's eyes fixed upon him, biding their time, as ever the poor cab-horse had launched at him in meaningless blasphemies, when his failing feet stumbled at the stones,— this happy person shall have no stripes,— shall have only the horse's fate of annihilation; or, if other things are indeed reserved for him, Heaven's kindness or omnipotence is to be doubted therefore.

§ 33. We cannot reason of these things. But this I know — and this may by all men be known — that no good or lovely thing exists in this world without its correspondent darkness; and that the universe presents itself continually to mankind under the stern aspect of warning, or of choice, the good and the evil set on the right hand and the left.

And in this mountain gloom, which weighs so strongly upon the human heart that in all time hitherto, as we have seen, the hill defiles have been either avoided in terror or inhabited in penance, there is but the fulfilment of the

universal law, that where the beauty and wisdom of the Divine working are most manifested, there also are manifested most clearly the terror of God's wrath, and the inevitableness of His power."

Nor is this gloom less wonderful so far as it bears witness to the error of human choice, even when the nature of good and evil is most definitely set before it. The trees of Paradise were fair; but our first parents hid themselves from God "in medio ligni Paradisi," in the midst of the trees of the garden. The hills were ordained for the help of man; but, instead of raising his eyes to the hills, from whence cometh his help, he does his idol sacrifice "upon every high hill and under every green tree." The mountain of the Lord's house is established above the hills; but Nadab and Abihu shall see under His feet the body of heaven in his clearness, yet go down to kindle the censer against their own souls. And so to the end of time it will be; to the end, that cry will still be heard among the Alpine winds, "Hear, oh ye mountains, the Lord's controversy!" Still, their gulfs of thawless ice, and unretarded roar of tormented waste, and deathful falls of fruitless waste, and unredeemed decay, must be the image of the souls of those who have chosen the darkness, and whose cry shall be to the mountains to fall on them, and to the hills to cover

them; and still, to the end of time, the clear waters of the unfailing springs, and the white pasture-lilies in their clothed multitude, and the abiding of the burning peaks in their nearness to the opened heaven, shall be the types, and the blessings, of those who have chosen light, and of whom it is written, "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, righteousness."

The Mountain Glory

The Mountain Glory

MODERN PAINTERS, PART V, CHAP. XX.

§ 1. I HAVE dwelt, in the foregoing chapter, on the sadness of the hills with the greater insistance that I feared my own excessive love for them might lead me into too favorable interpretation of their influences over the human heart; or, at least, that the reader might accuse me of fond prejudice, in the conclusions to which, finally, I desire to lead him concerning them. For, to myself, mountains are the beginning and the end of all natural scenery; in them, and in the forms of inferior landscape that lead to them, my affections are wholly bound up; and though I can look with happy admiration at the lowland flowers, and woods, and open skies, the happiness is tranquil and cold, like that of examining detached flowers in a conservatory, or reading a pleasant book; and if the scenery be resolutely level, insisting upon the declaration of its own flatness in all the detail of it, as in Holland, or Lincolnshire, or Central Lom-

bardy, it appears to me like a prison, and I cannot long endure it. But the slightest rise and fall in the road,— a mossy bank at the side of a crag of chalk, with brambles at its brow, overhanging it,— a ripple over three or four stones in the stream by the bridge,— above all, a wild bit of ferny ground under a fir or two, looking as if, possibly, one might see a hill if one got the other side of the trees, will instantly give me intense delight, because the shadow, or the hope, of the hills is in them.

§ 2. And thus, although there are few districts of Northern Europe, however apparently dull or tame, in which I cannot find pleasure, though the whole of Northern France (except Champagne), dull as it seems to most travellers, is to me a perpetual Paradise; and, putting Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, and one or two such other perfectly flat districts aside, there is not an English county which I should not find entertainment in exploring the cross-roads of, foot by foot; yet all my best enjoyment would be owing to the imagination of the hills, coloring, with their far-away memories, every lowland stone and herb. The pleasant French coteau, green in the sunshine, delights me, either by what real mountain character it has in itself (for in extent and succession of promontory the flanks of the French valleys have quite the sublimity of true mountain distances), or by its

broken ground and rugged steps among the vines, and rise of the leafage above, against the blue sky, as it might rise at Vevay or Como. There is not a wave of the Seine but is associated in my mind with the first rise of the sandstones and forest pines of Fontainebleau; and with the hope of the Alps, as one leaves Paris with the horses' heads to the south-west, the morning sun, flashing on the bright waves of Charenton. If there be *no* hope or association of this kind, and if I cannot deceive myself into fancying that perhaps at the next rise of the road there may be seen the film of a blue hill in the gleam of sky at the horizon, the landscape, however beautiful, produces in me even a kind of sickness and pain; and the whole view from Richmond Hill or Windsor Terrace,— nay, the gardens of Alcinous, with their perpetual summer,— or of the Hesperides (if they were flat, and not close to Atlas), golden apples and all —I would give away in an instant, for one mossy granite stone a foot broad, and two leaves of lady-fern.

§ 3. I know that this is in great part idiosyncrasy; and that I must not trust to my own feelings, in this respect, as representative of the modern landscape instinct; yet I know it is not idiosyncrasy, in so far as there may be proved to be indeed an increase of the absolute beauty of all scenery in exact proportion to its mountainous character, providing that character be

healthily mountainous. I do not mean to take the Col de Bon Homme as representative of hills, any more than I would take Romney Marsh as representative of plains; but putting Leicestershire or Staffordshire fairly beside Westmoreland, and Lombardy or Champagne fairly beside the Pays de Vaud or the Canton Berne, I find the increase in the calculable sum of elements of beauty to be steadily in proportion to the increase of mountainous character; and that the best image which the world can give of Paradise is in the slope of the meadows, orchards, and corn-fields on the sides of a great Alp, with its purple rocks and eternal snows above; this excellence not being in any wise a matter referable to feeling, or individual preferences, but demonstrable by calm enumeration of the number of lovely colors on the rocks, the varied grouping of the trees, and quantity of noble incidents in stream, crag, or cloud, presented to the eye at any given moment.

§ 4. For consider, first, the difference produced in the whole tone of landscape color by the introductions of purple, violet, and deep ultramarine blue, which we owe to mountains. In an ordinary lowland landscape we have the blue of the sky; the green of grass, which I will suppose (and this is an unnecessary concession to the lowlands) entirely fresh and bright; the green of trees; and certain elements of purple,

far more rich and beautiful than we generally should think, in their bark and shadows (bare hedges and thickets, or tops of trees, in subdued afternoon sunshine, are nearly perfect purple, and of an exquisite tone), as well as in ploughed fields, and dark ground in general. But among mountains, in *addition* to all this, large unbroken spaces of pure violet and purple are introduced in their distances; and even near, by films of cloud passing over the darkness of ravines or forests, blues are produced of the most subtle tenderness; these azures and purples passing into rose-color of otherwise wholly unattainable delicacy among the upper summits, the blue of the sky being at the same time purer and deeper than in the plains. Nay, in some sense, a person who has never seen the rose-color of the rays of dawn crossing a blue mountain twelve or fifteen miles away, can hardly be said to know what *tenderness* in color means at all; *bright* tenderness he may, indeed, see in the sky or in a flower, but this grave tenderness of the far-away hill-purples he cannot conceive.

§ 5. Together with this great source of pre-eminence in *mass* of color, we have to estimate the influence of the finished inlaying and enamel-work of the color-jewellery on every stone; and that of the continual variety in species of flower; most of the mountain flowers

being, besides, separately lovelier than the lowland ones. The wood hyacinth and wild rose are, indeed, the only *supreme* flowers that the lowlands can generally show; and the wild rose is also a mountaineer, and more fragrant in the hills, while the wood hyacinth, or grape hyacinth, at its best cannot match even the dark bell-gentian, leaving the light-blue star-gentian in its uncontested queenliness, and the Alpine rose and Highland heather wholly without similitude. The violet, lily of the valley, crocus, and wood anemone are, I suppose, claimable partly by the plains as well as the hills; but the large orange lily and narcissus I have never seen but on hill pastures, and the exquisite oxalis is preëminently a mountaineer.

§ 6. To this supremacy in mosses and flowers we have next to add an inestimable gain in the continual presence and power of water. Neither in its clearness, its color, its fantasy of motion, its calmness of space, depth, and reflection, or its wrath, can water be conceived by a lowlander, out of sight of sea. A sea wave is far grander than any torrent—but of the sea and its influences we are not now speaking; and the sea itself, though it *can* be clear, is never calm, among our shores, in the sense that a mountain lake can be calm. The sea seems only to pause; the mountain lake to sleep, and to dream. Out of sight of the ocean,

a lowlander cannot be considered ever to have seen water at all. The mantling of the pools in the rock shadows, with the golden flakes of light sinking down through them like falling leaves, the ringing of the thin currents among the shallows, the flash and the cloud of the cascade, the earthquake and foam-fire of the cataract, the long lines of alternate mirror and mist that lull the imagery of the hills reversed in the blue of morning,—all these things belong to those hills as their undivided inheritance.

§ 7. To this supremacy in wave and stream is joined a no less manifest preëminence in the character of trees. It is possible among plains, in the species of trees which properly belong to them, the poplars of Amiens, for instance, to obtain a serene simplicity of grace, which, as I said, is a better help to the study of gracefulness, as such, than any of the wilder groupings of the hills; so also, there are certain conditions of symmetrical luxuriance developed in the park and avenue, rarely rivalled in their way among mountains; and yet the mountain superiority in foliage is, on the whole, nearly as complete as it is in water; for exactly as there are some expressions in the broad reaches of a navigable lowland river, such as the Loire or Thames, not, in their way, to be matched among the rock rivers, and yet for all that a lowlander cannot be said to have truly seen the element of

water at all; so even in his richest parks and avenues he cannot be said to have truly seen trees. For the resources of trees are not developed until they have difficulty to contend with; neither their tenderness of brotherly love and harmony, till they are forced to choose their ways of various life where there is contracted room for them, talking to each other with their restrained branches. The various action of trees rooting themselves in inhospitable rocks, stooping to look into ravines, hiding from the search of glacier winds, reaching forth to the rays of rare sunshine, crowding down together to drink at sweetest streams, climbing hand in hand among the difficult slopes, opening in sudden dances round the mossy knolls, gathering into companies at rest among the fragrant fields, gliding in grave procession over the heavenward ridges,—nothing of this can be conceived among the unvexed and unvaried felicities of the lowland forest: while to all these direct sources of greater beauty are added, first the power of redundance,—the mere quantity of foliage visible in the folds and on the promontories of a single Alp being greater than that of an entire lowland landscape (unless a view from some cathedral tower); and to this charm of redundance, that of clearer *visibility*,—tree after tree being constantly shown in successive height, one behind another, instead

of the mere tops and flanks of masses, as in the plains; and the forms of multitudes of them continually defined against the clear sky, near and above, or against white clouds entangled among their branches, instead of being confused in dimness of distance.

§ 8. Finally, to this supremacy in foliage we have to add the still less questionable supremacy in clouds. There is no effect of sky possible in the lowlands which may not in equal perfection be seen among the hills; but there are effects by tens of thousands, forever invisible and inconceivable to the inhabitant of the plains, manifested among the hills in the course of one day. The mere power of familiarity with the clouds, of walking with them and above them, alters and renders clear our whole conception of the baseless architecture of the sky; and for the beauty of it, there is more in a single wreath of early cloud, pacing its way up an avenue of pines, or pausing among the points of their fringes, than in all the white heaps that fill the arched sky of the plains from one horizon to the other. And of the nobler cloud manifestations,— the breaking of their troublous seas against the crags, their black spray sparkling with lightning; or the going forth of the morning along their pavements of moving marble, level-laid between dome and dome of snow;— of these things there can be as little imagina-

tion or understanding in an inhabitant of the plains as of the scenery of another planet than his own.

§ 9. And, observe, all these superiorities are matters plainly measurable and calculable, not in any wise to be referred to estimate of *sensation*. Of the grandeur or expression of the hills I have not spoken; how far they are great, or strong, or terrible, I do not for the moment consider, because vastness, and strength, and terror, are not to all minds subjects of desired contemplation. It may make no difference to some men whether a natural object be large or small, whether it be strong or feeble. But loveliness of color, perfectness of form, endlessness of change, wonderfulness of structure, are precious to all undiseased human minds; and the superiority of the mountains in all these things to the lowland is, I repeat, as measurable as the richness of a painted window matched with a white one, or the wealth of a museum compared with that of a simply furnished chamber. They seem to have been built for the human race, as at once their schools and cathedrals; full of treasures of illuminated manuscript for the scholar, kindly in simple lessons to the worker, quiet in pale cloisters for the thinker, glorious in holiness for the worshipper. And of these great cathedrals of the earth, with their gates of rock, pavements of cloud, choirs of

stream and stone, altars of snow, and vaults of purple traversed by the continual stars,— of these, as we have seen, it was written, nor long ago, by one of the best of the poor human race for whom they were built, wondering in himself for whom their Creator *could* have made them, and thinking to have entirely discerned the Divine intent in them —"They are inhabited by the Beasts."

§ 10. Was it then indeed thus with us, and so lately? Had mankind offered no worship in their mountain churches? Was all that granite sculpture and floral painting done by the angels in vain?

Not so. It will need no prolonged thought to convince us that in the hills the purposes of their Maker have indeed been accomplished in such measure as, through the sin or folly of men, He ever permits them to be accomplished. It may not seem, from the general language held concerning them, or from any directly traceable results, that mountains have had serious influence on human intellect; but it will not, I think, be difficult to show that their occult influence has been both constant and essential to the progress of the race.

Venice

Venice

STONES OF VENICE, VOL. II, CHAP. I, "THE THRONE."

§ 1. IN the olden days of travelling, now to return no more, in which distance could not be vanquished without toil, but in which that toil was rewarded, partly by the power of deliberate survey of the countries through which the journey lay, and partly by the happiness of the evening hours, when, from the top of the last hill he had surmounted, the traveller beheld the quiet village where he was to rest, scattered among the meadows beside its valley stream; or, from the long-hoped-for turn in the dusty perspective of the causeway, saw, for the first time, the towers of some famed city, faint in the rays of sunset — hours of peaceful and thoughtful pleasure, for which the rush of the arrival in the railway station is perhaps not always, or to all men, an equivalent — in those days, I say, when there was something more to be anticipated and remembered in the first aspect of

each successive halting-place, than a new arrangement of glass roofing and iron girder, there were few moments of which the recollection was more fondly cherished by the traveller than that which brought him within sight of Venice, as his gondola shot into the open lagoon from the canal of Mestre. Not but that the aspect of the city itself was generally the source of some slight disappointment, for, seen in this direction, its buildings are far less characteristic than those of the other great towns of Italy; but this inferiority was partly disguised by distance, and more than atoned for by the strange rising of its walls and towers out of the midst, as it seemed, of the deep sea, for it was impossible that the mind or the eye could at once comprehend the shallowness of the vast sheet of water which stretched away in leagues of rippling lustre to the north and south, or trace the narrow line of islets bounding it to the east. The salt breeze, the white moaning sea-birds, the masses of black weed separating and disappearing gradually, in knots of heaving shoal, under the advance of the steady tide, all proclaimed it to be indeed the ocean on whose bosom the great city rested so calmly; not such blue, soft, lake-like ocean as bathes the Neapolitan promontories, or sleeps beneath the marble rocks of Genoa, but a sea with the bleak power of our own northern waves, yet subdued

into a strange spacious rest, and changed from its angry pallor into a field of burnished gold, as the sun declined behind the belfry tower of the lonely island church, fitly named "St. George of the Seaweed." As the boat drew nearer to the city, the coast which the traveller had just left sank behind him into one long, low, sad-colored line, tufted irregularly with brushwood and willows: but, at what seemed its northern extremity, the hills of Arqua rose in a dark cluster of purple pyramids, balanced on the bright mirage of the lagoon; two or three smooth surges of inferior hill extended themselves about their roots, and beyond these, beginning with the craggy peaks above Vicenza, the chain of the Alps girded the whole horizon to the north — a wall of jagged blue, here and there showing through its clefts a wilderness of misty precipices, fading far back into the recesses of Cadore, and itself rising and breaking away eastward, where the sun struck opposite upon its snow, into mighty fragments of peaked light, standing up behind the barred clouds of evening, one after another, countless, the crown of the Adrian Sea, until the eye turned back from pursuing them, to rest upon the nearer burning of the campaniles of Murano, and on the great city, where it magnified itself along the waves, as the quick silent pacing of the gondola drew nearer and nearer. And at last, when its walls

were reached, and the outmost of its untrodden streets was entered, not through towered gate or guarded rampart, but as a deep inlet between two rocks of coral in the Indian sea; when first upon the traveller's sight opened the long ranges of columned palaces,—each with its black boat moored at the portal,—each with its image cast down, beneath its feet, upon that green pavement which every breeze broke into new fantasies of rich tessellation; when first, at the extremity of the bright vista, the shadowy Rialto threw its colossal curve slowly forth from behind the palace of the Camerlenghi; that strange curve, so delicate, so adamantine, strong as a mountain cavern, graceful as a bow just bent; when first, before its moonlight circumference was all risen, the gondolier's cry, "Ah! Stalì," struck sharp upon the ear, and the prow turned aside under the mighty cornices that half met over the narrow canal, where the plash of the water followed close and loud, ringing along the marble by the boat's side; and when at last that boat darted forth upon the breadth of silver sea, across which the front of the Ducal palace, flushed with its sanguine veins, looks to the snowy dome of Our Lady of Salvation, it was no marvel that the mind should be so deeply entranced by the visionary charm of a scene so beautiful and so strange, as to forget the darker truths of its history and its being.

Well might it seem that such a city had owed her existence rather to the rod of the enchanter, than the fear of the fugitive; that the waters which encircled her had been chosen for the mirror of her state, rather than the shelter of her nakedness; and that all which in nature was wild or merciless,— Time and Decay, as well as the waves and tempests,— had been won to adorn her instead of to destroy, and might still spare, for ages to come, that beauty which seemed to have fixed for its throne the sands of the hour-glass as well as of the sea.

§ 11. And although the last few eventful years, fraught with change to the face of the whole earth, have been more fatal in their influence on Venice than the five hundred that preceded them; though the noble landscape of approach to her can now be seen no more, or seen only by a glance, as the engine slackens its rushing on the iron line; and though many of her palaces are for ever defaced, and many in desecrated ruins, there is still so much of magic in her aspect, that the hurried traveller, who must leave her before the wonder of that first aspect has been worn away, may still be led to forget the humility of her origin, and to shut his eyes to the depth of her desolation. They, at least, are little to be envied, in whose hearts the great charities of the imagination lie dead, and for whom the fancy has no power to re-

press the importunity of painful impressions, or to raise what is ignoble, and disguise what is discordant, in a scene so rich in its remembrances, so surpassing in its beauty. But for this work of the imagination there must be no permission during the task which is before us. The impotent feelings of romance, so singularly characteristic of this century, may indeed gild, but never save the remains of those mightier ages to which they are attached like climbing flowers; and they must be torn away from the magnificent fragments, if we would see them as they stood in their own strength. Those feelings, always as fruitless as they are fond, are in Venice not only incapable of protecting, but even of discerning, the objects to which they ought to have been attached. The Venice of modern fiction and drama is a thing of yesterday, a mere efflorescence of decay, a stage dream which the first ray of daylight must dissipate into dust. No prisoner, whose name is worth remembering, or whose sorrow deserved sympathy, ever crossed that "Bridge of Sighs," which is the centre of the Byronic ideal of Venice; no great merchant of Venice ever saw that Rialto under which the traveller now passes with breathless interest: the statue which Byron makes Faliero address as of one of his great ancestors was erected to a soldier of fortune a hundred and fifty years after Faliero's

death; and the most conspicuous parts of the city have been so entirely altered in the course of the last three centuries, that if Henry Dandolo or Francis Foscari could be summoned from their tombs, and stood each on the deck of his galley at the entrance of the Grand Canal, that renowned entrance, the painter's favorite subject, the novelist's favorite scene, where the water first narrows by the steps of the Church of La Salute,—the mighty Doges would not know in what spot of the world they stood, would literally not recognize one stone of the great city, for whose sake, and by whose ingratitude, their grey hairs had been brought down with bitterness to the grave. The remains of *their* Venice lie hidden behind the cumbrous masses which were the delight of the nation in its dotage; hidden in many a grass-grown court, and silent pathway, and lightless canal, where the slow waves have sapped their foundations for five hundred years, and must soon prevail over them for ever. It must be our task to glean and gather them forth, and restore out of them some faint image of the lost city, more gorgeous a thousand-fold than that which now exists, yet not created in the day-dream of the prince, nor by the ostentation of the noble, but built by iron hands and patient hearts, contending against the adversity of nature and the fury of man, so that its wonderfulness cannot be

grasped by the indolence of imagination, but only after frank inquiry into the true nature of that wild and solitary scene, whose restless tides and trembling sands did indeed shelter the birth of the city, but long denied her dominion.

§ III. When the eye falls casually on a map of Europe, there is no feature by which it is more likely to be arrested than the strange sweeping loop formed by the junction of the Alps and Apennines, and enclosing the great basin of Lombardy. This return of the mountain chain upon itself causes a vast difference in the character of the distribution of its débris on its opposite sides. The rock fragments and sediment which the torrents on the north side of the Alps bear into the plains are distributed over a vast extent of country, and, though here and there lodged in beds of enormous thickness, soon permit the firm substrata to appear from underneath them; but all the torrents which descend from the southern side of the High Alps, and from the northern slope of the Apennines, meet concentrically in the recess or mountain bay which the two ridges enclose; every fragment which thunder breaks out of their battlements, and every grain of dust which the summer rain washes from their pastures, is at last laid at rest in the blue sweep of the Lombardic plain; and that plain must have risen within its rocky barriers as a cup fills with wine,

but for two contrary influences which continually depress, or disperse from its surface, the accumulation of the ruins of ages.

§ IV. I will not tax the reader's faith in modern science by insisting on the singular depression of the surface of Lombardy, which appears for many centuries to have taken place steadily and continually; the main fact with which we have to do is the gradual transport, by the Po and its great collateral rivers, of vast masses of the finer sediment to the sea. The character of the Lombardic plains is most strikingly expressed by the ancient walls of its cities, composed for the most part of large rounded Alpine pebbles alternating with narrow courses of brick; and was curiously illustrated in 1848, by the ramparts of these same pebbles thrown up four or five feet high round every field, to check the Austrian cavalry in the battle under the walls of Verona. The finer dust among which these pebbles are dispersed is taken up by the rivers, fed into continual strength by the Alpine snow, so that, however pure their waters may be when they issue from the lakes at the foot of the great chain, they become of the color and opacity of clay before they reach the Adriatic; the sediment which they bear is at once thrown down as they enter the sea, forming a vast belt of low land along the eastern coast of Italy. The powerful stream of the Po of course builds

forward the fastest; on each side of it, north and south, there is a tract of marsh, fed by more feeble streams, and less liable to rapid change than the delta of the central river. In one of these tracts is built RAVENNA, and in the other VENICE.

§ v. What circumstances directed the peculiar arrangement of this great belt of sediment in the earliest times, it is not here the place to inquire. It is enough for us to know that from the mouths of the Adige to those of the Piave there stretches, at a variable distance of from three to five miles from the actual shore, a bank of sand, divided into long islands by narrow channels of sea. The space between this bank and the true shore consists of the sedimentary deposits from these and other rivers, a great plain of calcareous mud, covered, in the neighborhood of Venice, by the sea at high water, to the depth in most p'aces of a foot or a foot and a half, and nearly everywhere exposed at low tide, but divided by an intricate network of narrow and winding channels, from which the sea never retires. In some places, according to the run of the currents, the land has risen into marshy islets, consolidated, some by art, and some by time, into ground firm enough to be built upon, or fruitful enough to be cultivated: in others, on the contrary, it has not reached the sea-level; so that, at the average

low water, shallow lakelets glitter among its irregularly exposed fields of seaweed. In the midst of the largest of these, increased in importance by the confluence of several large river channels towards one of the openings in the sea bank, the city of Venice itself is built, on a crowded cluster of islands; the various plots of higher ground which appear to the north and south of this central cluster, have at different periods been also thickly inhabited, and now bear, according to their size, the remains of cities, villages, or isolated convents and churches, scattered among spaces of open ground, partly waste and encumbered by ruins, partly under cultivation for the supply of the metropolis.

§ VI. The average rise and fall of the tide is about three feet (varying considerably with the seasons); but this fall, on so flat a shore, is enough to cause continual movement in the waters, and in the main canals to produce a reflux which frequently runs like a mill stream. At high water no land is visible for many miles to the north or south of Venice, except in the form of small islands crowned with towers or gleaming with villages: there is a channel, some three miles wide, between the city and the mainland, and some mile and a half wide between it and the sandy breakwater called the Lido, which divides the lagoon from the Adri-

atic, but which is so low as hardly to disturb the impression of the city's having been built in the midst of the ocean, although the secret of its true position is partly, yet not painfully, betrayed by the clusters of piles set to mark the deep-water channels, which undulate far away in spotty chains like the studded backs of huge sea-snakes, and by the quick glittering of the crisped and crowded waves that flicker and dance before the strong winds upon the unlifted level of the shallow sea. But the scene is widely different at low tide. A fall of eighteen or twenty inches is enough to show ground over the greater part of the lagoon; and at the complete ebb the city is seen standing in the midst of a dark plain of seaweed, of gloomy green, except only where the larger branches of the Brenta and its associated streams converge towards the port of the Lido. Through this salt and sombre plain the gondola and the fishing-boat advance by tortuous channels, seldom more than four or five feet deep, and often so choked with slime that the heavier keels furrow the bottom till their crossing tracks are seen through the clear sea water like the ruts upon a wintry road, and the oar leaves blue gashes upon the ground at every stroke, or is entangled among the thick weed that fringes the banks with the weight of its sullen waves, leaning to and fro upon the uncertain

sway of the exhausted tide. The scene is often profoundly oppressive, even at this day, when every plot of higher ground bears some fragment of fair building: but, in order to know what it was once, let the traveller follow in his boat at evening the windings of some unfrequented channel far into the midst of the melancholy plain; let him remove, in his imagination, the brightness of the great city that still extends itself in the distance, and the walls and towers from the islands that are near; and so wait, until the bright investiture and sweet warmth of the sunset are withdrawn from the waters, and the black desert of their shore lies in its nakedness beneath the night, pathless, comfortless, infirm, lost in dark languor and fearful silence, except where the salt runlets plash into the tideless pools, or the sea-birds flit from their margins with a questioning cry; and he will be enabled to enter in some sort into the horror of heart with which this solitude was anciently chosen by man for his habitation. They little thought, who first drove the stakes into the sand, and strewed the ocean reeds for their rest, that their children were to be the princes of that ocean, and their palaces its pride; and yet, in the great natural laws that rule that sorrowful wilderness, let it be remembered what strange preparation had been made for the things which no human imagination could have

foretold, and how the whole existence and fortune of the Venetian nation were anticipated or compelled, by the setting of those bars and doors to the rivers and the sea. Had deeper currents divided their islands, hostile navies would again and again have reduced the rising city into servitude; had stronger surges beaten their shores, all the richness and refinement of the Venetian architecture must have been exchanged for the walls and bulwarks of an ordinary sea-port. Had there been no tide, as in other parts of the Mediterranean, the narrow canals of the city would have become noisome, and the marsh in which it was built pestiferous. Had the tide been only a foot or eighteen inches higher in its rise, the water-access to the doors of the palaces would have been impossible: even as it is, there is sometimes a little difficulty, at the ebb, in landing without setting foot upon the lower and slippery steps: and the highest tides sometimes enter the courtyards, and overflow the entrance halls. Eighteen inches more of difference between the level of the flood and ebb would have rendered the doorsteps of every palace, at low water, a treacherous mass of weeds and limpets, and the entire system of water-carriage for the higher classes, in their easy and daily intercourse, must have been done away with. The streets of the city would have been widened, its network of canals

filled up, and all the peculiar character of the place and the people destroyed.

§ VII. The reader may perhaps have felt some pain in the contrast between this faithful view of the site of the Venetian Throne, and the romantic conception of it which we ordinarily form; but this pain, if he have felt it, ought to be more than counterbalanced by the value of the instance thus afforded to us at once of the inscrutableness and the wisdom of the ways of God. If, two thousand years ago, we had been permitted to watch the slow settling of the slime of those turbid rivers into the polluted sea, and the gaining upon its deep and fresh waters of the lifeless, impassable, unvoyageable plain, how little could we have understood the purpose with which those islands were shaped out of the void, and the torpid waters enclosed with their desolate walls of sand! How little could we have known, any more than of what now seems to us most distressful, dark, and objectless, the glorious aim which was then in the mind of Him in whose hand are all the corners of the earth! how little imagined that in the laws which were stretching forth the gloomy margins of those fruitless banks, and feeding the bitter grass among their shallows, there was indeed a preparation, and *the only preparation possible*, for the founding of a city which was to be set like a golden clasp on the girdle of the

earth, to write her history on the white scrolls of the sea-surges, and to word it in their thunder, and to gather and give forth, in world-wide pulsation, the glory of the West and of the East, from the burning heart of her Fortitude and Splendor.

St. Mark's

St. Mark's

STONES OF VENICE, VOL. II, CHAP. IV.

AND now I wish that the reader, before I bring him into St. Mark's Place, would imagine himself for a little time in a quiet English cathedral town, and walk with me to the west front of its cathedral. Let us go together up the more retired street, at the end of which we can see the pinnacles of one of the towers, and then through the low grey gateway, with its battlemented top and small latticed window in the centre, into the inner private-looking road or close, where nothing goes in but the carts of the tradesmen who supply the bishop and the chapter, and where there are little shaven grass-plots, fenced in by neat rails, before old-fashioned groups of somewhat diminutive and excessively trim houses, with little oriel and bay windows jutting out here and there, and deep wooden cornices and eaves painted cream color and white, and small porches to their doors in the shape of cockle-shells, or little, crooked, thick, inde-

scribable wooden gables warped a little on one side; and so forward till we come to larger houses, also old-fashioned, but of red brick, and with gardens behind them, and fruit walls, which show here and there, among the nectarines, the vestiges of an old cloister arch or shaft, and looking in front on the cathedral square itself, laid out in rigid division of smooth grass and gravel walk, yet not uncheerful, especially on the sunny side where the canons' children are walking with their nursery-maids. And so, taking care not to tread on the grass, we will go along the straight walk to the west front, and there stand for a time, looking up at its deep-pointed porches and the dark places between their pillars where there were statues once, and where the fragments, here and there, of a stately figure are still left, which has in it the likeness of a king, perhaps indeed a king on earth, perhaps a saintly king long ago in heaven; and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered, and grey, and grisly with heads of dragons and mocking fiends, worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shape, and colored on their stony scales by the deep russet-orange lichen, melancholy gold; and so, higher still, to the bleak towers, so far above that the eye loses itself among the bosses of their traceries,

though they are rude and strong, and only sees like a drift of eddying black points, now closing, now scattering, and now settling suddenly into invisible places among the bosses and flowers, the crowd of restless birds that fill the whole square with that strange clangor of theirs, so harsh and yet so soothing, like the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and sea.

Think for a little while of that scene, and the meaning of all its small formalisms, mixed with its serene sublimity. Estimate its secluded, continuous, drowsy felicities, and its evidence of the sense and steady performance of such kind of duties as can be regulated by the cathedral clock; and weigh the influence of those dark towers on all who have passed through the lonely square at their feet for centuries, and on all who have seen them rising far away over the wooded plain, or catching on their square masses the last rays of the sunset, when the city at their feet was indicated only by the mist at the bend of the river. And then let us quickly recollect that we are in Venice, and land at the extremity of the Calle Lunga San Moisè, which may be considered as there answering to the secluded street that led us to our English cathedral gateway.

We find ourselves in a paved alley, some seven feet wide where it is widest, full

of people, and resonant with cries of itinerant salesmen,—a shriek in their beginning, and dying away into a kind of brazen ringing, all the worse for its confinement between the high houses of the passage along which we have to make our way. Over-head an extricable confusion of rugged shutters, and iron balconies and chimney flues pushed out on brackets to save room, and arched windows with projecting sills of Istrian stone, and gleams of green leaves here and there where a fig-tree branch escapes over a lower wall from some inner cortile, leading the eye up to the narrow stream of blue sky high over all. On each side, a row of shops, as densely set as may be, occupying, in fact, intervals between the square stone shafts, about eight feet high, which carry the first floors: intervals of which one is narrow and serves as a door; the other is, in the more respectable shops, wainscoted to the height of the counter and glazed above, but in those of the poorer tradesmen left open to the ground, and the wares laid on benches and tables in the open air, the light in all cases entering at the front only, and fading away in a few feet from the threshold into a gloom which the eye from without cannot penetrate, but which is generally broken by a ray or two from a feeble lamp at the back of the shop, suspended before a print of the Virgin. The less pious shopkeeper

sometimes leaves his lamp unlighted, and is contented with a penny print; the more religious one has his print colored and set in a little shrine with a gilded or figured fringe, with perhaps a faded flower or two on each side, and his lamp burning brilliantly. Here at the fruiterer's, where the dark-green water-melons are heaped upon the counter like cannon balls, the Madonna has a tabernacle of fresh laurel leaves; but the pewterer next door has let his lamp out, and there is nothing to be seen in his shop but the dull gleam of the studded patterns on the copper pans, hanging from his roof in the darkness. Next comes a "Vendita Frittole e Liquori," where the Virgin, enthroned in a very humble manner beside a tallow candle on a back shelf, presides over certain ambrosial morsels of a nature too ambiguous to be defined or enumerated. But a few steps farther on, at the regular wine-shop of the calle, where we are offered "Vino Nostrani a Soldi 28·32," the Madonna is in great glory, enthroned above ten or a dozen large red casks of three-year-old vintage, and flanked by goodly ranks of bottles of Maraschino, and two crimson lamps; and for the evening, when the gondoliers will come to drink out, under her auspices, the money they have gained during the day, she will have a whole chandelier.

A yard or two farther, we pass the

hostelry of the Black Eagle, and, glancing as we pass through the square door of marble, deeply moulded, in the outer wall, we see the shadows of its pergola of vines resting on an ancient well, with a pointed shield carved on its side; and so presently emerge on the bridge and Campo San Moisè, whence to the entrance into St. Mark's Place, called the Bocca di Piazza (mouth of the square), the Venetian character is nearly destroyed, first by the frightful façade of San Moisè, which we will pause at another time to examine, and then by the modernizing of the shops as they near the piazza, and the mingling with the lower Venetian populace of lounging groups of English and Austrians. We will push fast through them into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the "Bocca di Piazza," and then we forget them all; for between those pillars there opens a great light, and, in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level field of chequered stones; and, on each side, the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture, and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away; — a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of colored light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory, — sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes; and, in the midst of it, the solemn forms of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones, jasper and porphyry, and deep-green serpentine spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, "their bluest veins to

kiss"— the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs, all beginning and ending in the Cross; and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life — angels, and the signs of heaven, and the labors of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth; and above these, another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,— a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's Lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.

Between that grim cathedral of England and this, what an interval! There is a type of it in the very birds that haunt them; for, instead of the restless crowd, hoarse-voiced and sable-winged, drifting on the bleak upper air, the St. Mark's porches are full of doves, that nestle

among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years.

And what effect has this splendor on those who pass beneath it? You may walk from sunrise to sunset, to and fro, before the gateway of St. Mark's, and you will not see an eye lifted to it, nor a countenance brightened by it. Priest and layman, soldier and civilian, rich and poor, pass by it alike regardlessly. Up to the very recesses of the porches, the meanest tradesmen of the city push their counters; nay, the foundations of its pillars are themselves the seats — not "of them that sell doves" for sacrifice, but of the vendors of toys and caricatures. Round the whole square in front of the church there is almost a continuous line of cafés, where the idle Venetians of the middle classes lounge, and read empty journals; in its centre the Austrian bands play during the time of vespers, their martial music jarring with the organ notes,— the march drowning the miserere, and the sullen crowd thickening round them,— a crowd, which, if it had its will, would stiletto every soldier that pipes to it. And in the recesses of the porches, all day long, knots of men of the lowest classes, unemployed and listless, lie basking in the sun like lizards; and

unregarded children,— every heavy glance of their young eyes full of desperation and stony depravity, and their throats hoarse with cursing, — gamble, and fight, and snarl, and sleep, hour after hour, clashing their bruised centesimi upon the marble ledges of the church porch. And the images of Christ and His angels look down upon it continually.

Art and Morals

Art and Morals

LECTURES ON ART, LECTURE III.

YOU probably recollect that, in the beginning of my last lecture, it was stated that fine art had, and could have, but three functions: the enforcing of the religious sentiments of men, the perfecting their ethical state, and the doing them material service. We have to-day to examine the mode of its action in the second power, that of perfecting the morality or ethical state of men.

Perfecting, observe — not producing.

You must have the right moral state first, or you cannot have the art. But when the art is once obtained, its reflected action enhances and completes the moral state out of which it arose, and, above all, communicates the exaltation to other minds which are already morally capable of the like.

For instance, take the art of singing, and the simplest perfect master of it, (up to the limits of his nature) whom you can find — a skylark. From him you may learn what it is to "sing for

joy." You must get the moral state first, the pure gladness, then give it finished expression; and it is perfected in itself, and made communicable to other creatures capable of such joy. But it is incommunicable to those who are not prepared to receive it.

Now, all right human song is, similarly, the finished expression, by art, of the joy or grief of noble persons, for right causes. And accurately in proportion to the rightness of the cause, and purity of the emotion, is the possibility of the fine art. A maiden may sing of her lost love, but a miser cannot sing of his lost money. And with absolute precision from highest to lowest, the fineness of the possible art is an index of the moral purity and majesty of the emotion it expresses. You may test it practically at any instant. Question with yourselves respecting any feeling that has taken strong possession of your mind, "Could this be sung by a master, and sung nobly, with a true melody and art?" Then it is a right feeling. Could it not be sung at all, or only sung ludicrously? It is a base one. And that is so in all the arts; so that with mathematical precision, subject to no error or exception, the art of a nation, so far as it exists, is an exponent of its ethical state.

An exponent, observe, and exalting influence; but not the root or cause. You cannot

paint or sing yourselves into being good men; you must be good men before you can either paint or sing, and then the colour and sound will complete in you all that is best.

And this it was that I called upon you to hear, saying, "listen to me at least now," in the first lecture, namely, that no art-teaching could be of use to you, but would rather be harmful, unless it was grafted on something deeper than all art. For indeed not only with this, of which it is my function to show you the laws, but much more with the art of all men, which you came here chiefly to learn, that of language, the chief vices of education have arisen from the one great fallacy of supposing that noble language is a communicable trick of grammar and accent, instead of simply the careful expression of right thought. All the virtues of language are, in their roots, moral; it becomes accurate if the speaker desires to be true; clear, if he speaks with sympathy and a desire to be intelligible; powerful, if he has earnestness; pleasant, if he has sense of rhythm and order. There are no other virtues of language producible by art than these: but let me mark more deeply for an instant the significance of one of them. Language, I said, is only clear when it is sympathetic. You can, in truth, understand a man's word only by understanding his temper. Your own word is also as of an unknown tongue

to him unless he understands yours. And it is this which makes the art of language, if any one is to be chosen separately from the rest, that which is fittest for the instrument of a gentleman's education. To teach the meaning of a word thoroughly is to teach the nature of the spirit that coined it; the secret of language is the secret of sympathy, and its full charm is possible only to the gentle. And thus the principles of beautiful speech have all been fixed by sincere and kindly speech. On the laws which have been determined by sincerity, false speech, apparently beautiful, may afterwards be constructed; but all such utterance, whether in oration or poetry, is not only without permanent power, but it is destructive of the principles it has usurped. So long as no words are uttered but in faithfulness, so long the art of language goes on exalting itself; but the moment it is shaped and chiselled on external principles, it falls into frivolity, and perishes. And this truth would have been long ago manifest, had it not been that in periods of advanced academical science there is always a tendency to deny the sincerity of the first masters of language. Once learn to write gracefully in the manner of an ancient author, and we are apt to think that he also wrote in the manner of some one else. But no noble nor right style was ever yet founded but out of a sincere heart.

No man is worth reading to form your style, who does not mean what he says; nor was any great style ever invented but by some man who meant what he said. Find out the beginner of a great manner of writing, and you have also found the declarer of some true facts or sincere passions; and your whole method of reading will thus be quickened, for, being sure that your author really meant what he said, you will be much more careful to ascertain what it is that he means.

And of yet greater importance is it deeply to know that every beauty possessed by the language of a nation is significant of the innermost laws of its being. Keep the temper of the people stern and manly; make their associations grave, courteous, and for worthy objects; occupy them in just deeds; and their tongue must needs be a grand one. Nor is it possible, therefore — observe the necessary reflected action — that any tongue should be a noble one, of which the words are not so many trumpet-calls to action. All great languages invariably utter great things, and command them; they cannot be mimicked but by obedience; the breath of them is inspiration because it is not only vocal, but vital; and you can only learn to speak as these men spoke, by becoming what these men were.

Now for direct confirmation of this, I want

you to think over the relation of expression to character in two great masters of the absolute art of language, Virgil and Pope. You are perhaps surprised at the last name; and indeed you have in English much higher grasp and melody of language from more passionate minds, but you have nothing else, in its range, so perfect. I name, therefore, these two men, because they are the two most accomplished *Artists*, merely as such, whom I know in literature; and because I think you will be afterwards interested in investigating how the infinite grace in the words of the one, the severity in those of the other, and the precision in those of both, arise wholly out of the moral elements of their minds:—out of the deep tenderness in Virgil which enabled him to write the stories of Nisus and Lausus; and the serene and just benevolence which placed Pope, in his theology, two centuries in advance of his time, and enabled him to sum the law of noble life in two lines which, so far as I know, are the most complete, the most concise, and the most lofty expression of moral temper existing in English words:—

"*Never elated, while one man's oppress'd;*
Never dejected, while another's bless'd."

I wish you also to remember these lines of Pope, and to make yourselves entirely masters of his system of ethics; because, putting Shakespeare

aside as rather the world's than ours, I hold Pope to be the most perfect representative we have, since Chaucer, of the true English mind; and I think the Dunciad is the most absolutely chiselled and monumental work "exacted" in our country. You will find, as you study Pope, that he has expressed for you, in the strictest language and within the briefest limits, every law of art, of criticism, of economy, of policy, and, finally, of a benevolence, humble, rational, and resigned, contented with its allotted share of life, and trusting the problem of its salvation to Him in whose hand lies that of the universe.

And now I pass to the arts with which I have special concern, in which, though the facts are exactly the same, I shall have more difficulty in proving my assertion, because very few of us are as cognisant of the merit of painting as we are of that of language; and I can only show you whence that merit springs from, after having thoroughly shown you in what it consists. But, in the meantime, I have simply to tell you, that the manual arts are as accurate exponents of ethical state, as other modes of expression; first, with absolute precision, of that of the workman, and then with precision, disguised by many distorting influences, of that of the nation to which he belongs.

And, first, they are a perfect exponent of the mind of the workman; but, being so, remem-

ber, if the mind be great or complex, the art is not an easy book to read; for we must ourselves possess all the mental characters of which we are to read the signs. No man can read the evidence of labour who is not himself laborious, for he does not know what the work cost: nor can he read the evidence of true passion if he is not passionate; nor of gentleness if he is not gentle: and the most subtle signs of fault and weakness of character he can only judge by having had the same faults to fight with. I myself, for instance, know impatient work, and tired work, better than most critics, because I am myself always impatient, and often tired:—so also, the patient and indefatigable touch of a mighty master becomes more wonderful to me than to others. Yet, wonderful in no mean measure it will be to you all, when I make it manifest;—and as soon as we begin our real work, and you have learned what it is to draw a true line, I shall be able to make manifest to you,—and indisputably so,—that the day's work of a man like Mantegna or Paul Veronese consists of an unfaltering, uninterrupted succession of movements of the hand more precise than those of the finest fencer: the pencil leaving one point and arriving at another, not only with unerring precision at the extremity of the line, but with an unerring and yet varied course —sometimes over spaces a foot or more in ex-

tent — yet a course so determined everywhere that either of these men could, and Veronese often does, draw a finished profile, or any other portion of the contour of a face, with one line, not afterwards changed. Try, first, to realise to yourselves the muscular precision of that action, and the intellectual strain of it; for the movement of a fencer is perfect in practised monotony; but the movement of the hand of a great painter is at every instant governed by direct and new intention. Then imagine that muscular firmness and subtlety, and that instantaneously selective and ordinant energy of the brain, sustained all day long, not only without fatigue, but with a visible joy in the exertion, like that which an eagle seems to take in the wave of his wings; and this all life long, and through long life, not only without failure of power, but with visible increase of it, until the actually organic changes of old age. And then consider, so far as you know anything of physiology, what sort of an ethical state of body and mind that means! — ethic through ages past! what fineness of race there must be to get it, what exquisite balance and symmetry of the vital powers! And then, finally, determine for yourselves whether a manhood like that is consistent with any viciousness of soul, with any mean anxiety, any gnawing lust, any wretchedness of spite or remorse, any consciousness of

rebellion against law of God or man, or any actual, though unconscious, violation of even the least law to which obedience is essential for the glory of life, and the pleasing of its Giver.

It is, of course, true that many of the strong masters had deep faults of character, but their faults always show in their work. It is true that some could not govern their passions; if so, they died young, or they painted ill when old. But the greater part of our misapprehension in the whole matter is from our not having well known who the great painters were, and taking delight in the petty skill that was bred in the fumes of the taverns of the North, instead of theirs who breathed empyreal air, sons of the morning, under the woods of Assisi and the crags of Cadore.

It is true however also, as I have pointed out long ago, that the strong masters fall into two great divisions, one leading simple and natural lives, the other restrained in a Puritanism of the worship of beauty; and these two manners of life you may recognise in a moment by their work. Generally the naturalists are the strongest; but there are two of the Puritans, whose work if I can succeed in making clearly understandable to you during my three years here, it is all I need care to do. But of these two Puritans one I cannot name to you, and the other I at present will not. One I cannot, for

no one knows his name, except the baptismal one, Bernard, or "dear little Bernard"—Bernardino, called, from his birthplace, (Luino, on the lago Maggiore,) Bernard of Luino. The other is a Venetian, of whom many of you probably have never heard, and of whom, through me, you shall not hear until I have tried to get some picture by him over to England.

Observe then, this Puritanism in the worship of beauty, though sometimes weak, is always honourable and amiable, and the exact reverse of the false Puritanism, which consists in the dread or disdain of beauty. And in order to treat my subject rightly, I ought to proceed from the skill of art to the choice of its subject, and show you how the moral temper of the workman is shown by his seeking lovely forms and thoughts to express, as well as by the force of his hand in expression. But I need not now urge this part of the proof on you, because you are already, I believe, sufficiently conscious of the truth in this matter, and also I have already said enough of it in my writings; whereas I have not at all said enough of the infallibleness of fine technical work as a proof of every other good power. And indeed it was long before I myself understood the true meaning of the pride of the greatest men in their mere execution, shown, for a permanent lesson to us, in the stories which, whether true or not, indicate with

absolute accuracy the general conviction of great artists; — the stories of the contest of Apelles and Protogenes in a line only, (of which I can promise you, you shall know the meaning to some purpose in a little while), — the story of the circle of Giotto, and especially, which you may perhaps not have observed, the expression of Durer in his inscription on the drawings sent him by Raphael. These figures, he says, "Raphael drew and sent to Albert Durer in Nurnberg, to show him" — What? Not his invention, nor his beauty of expression, but "sein Hand zu weisen," "To show him his *hand*." And you will find, as you examine farther, that all inferior artists are continually trying to escape from the necessity of sound work, and either indulging themselves in their delights in subject, or pluming themselves on their noble motives for attempting what they cannot perform; (and observe, by the way, that a great deal of what is mistaken for conscientious motive is nothing but a very pestilent, because very subtle, condition of vanity); whereas the great men always understand at once that the first morality of a painter, as of everybody else, is to know his business; and so earnest are they in this, that many, whose lives you would think, by the results of their work, had been passed in strong emotion, have in reality subdued themselves, though capable of the very strong-

est passions, into a calm as absolute as that of a deeply sheltered mountain lake, which reflects every agitation of the clouds in the sky, and every change of the shadows on the hills, but is itself motionless.

Finally, you must remember that great obscurity has been brought upon the truth in this matter by the want of integrity and simplicity in our modern life. I mean integrity in the Latin sense, wholeness. Everything is broken up, and mingled in confusion, both in our habits and thoughts; besides being in great part imitative: so that you not only cannot tell what a man is, but sometimes you cannot tell whether he *is*, at all! — whether you have indeed to do with a spirit, or only with an echo. And thus the same inconsistencies appear now, between the work of artists of merit and their personal characters, as those which you find continually disappointing expectation in the lives of men of modern literary power; — the same conditions of society having obscured or misdirected the best qualities of the imagination, both in our literature and art. Thus there is no serious question with any of us as to the personal character of Dante and Giotto, of Shakespeare and Holbein; but we pause timidly in the attempt to analyse the moral laws of the art skill in recent poets, novelists, and painters.

Let me assure you once for all, that as you

grow older, if you enable yourselves to distinguish, by the truth of your own lives, what is true in those of other men, you will gradually perceive that all good has its origin in good, never in evil; that the fact of either literature or painting being truly fine of their kind, whatever their mistaken aim, or partial error, is proof of their noble origin: and that, if there is indeed sterling value in the thing done, it has come of a sterling worth in the soul that did it, however alloyed or defiled by conditions of sin which are sometimes more appalling or more strange than those which all may detect in their own hearts, because they are part of a personality altogether larger than ours, and as far beyond our judgment in its darkness as beyond our following in its light. And it is sufficient warning against what some might dread as the probable effect of such a conviction on your own minds, namely, that you might permit yourselves in the weaknesses which you imagined to be allied to genius, when they took the form of personal temptations;—it is surely, I say, sufficient warning against so mean a folly, to discern, as you may with little pains, that, of all human existences, the lives of men of that distorted and tainted nobility of intellect are probably the most miserable.

I pass to the second, and for us the more practically important question, What is the

effect of noble art upon other men; what has it done for national morality in time past; and what effect is the extended knowledge or possession of it likely to have upon us now? And here we are at once met by the facts, which are as gloomy as indisputable, that, while many peasant populations, among whom scarcely the rudest practice of art has ever been attempted, have lived in comparative innocence, honour, and happiness, the worst foulness and cruelty of savage tribes have been frequently associated with fine ingenuities of decorative design; also, that no people has ever attained the higher stages of art skill, except at a period of its civilisation which was sullied by frequent, violent, and even monstrous crime; and, lastly, that the attaining of perfection in art power, has been hitherto, in every nation, the accurate signal of the beginning of its ruin.

Respecting which phenomena, observe first, that although good never springs out of evil, it is developed to its highest by contention with evil. There are some groups of peasantry, in far-away nooks of Christian countries, who are nearly as innocent as lambs; but the morality which gives power to art is the morality of men, not of cattle.

Secondly, the virtues of the inhabitants of many country districts are apparent, not real; their lives are indeed artless, but not innocent;

and it is only the monotony of circumstances, and the absence of temptation, which prevent the exhibition of evil passions not less real because often dormant, nor less foul because shown only in petty faults, or inactive malignities.

But you will observe also that *absolute* artlessness, to men in any kind of moral health, is impossible; they have always, at least, the art by which they live — agriculture or seamanship; and in these industries, skilfully practised, you will find the law of their moral training; while, whatever the adversity of circumstances, every rightly-minded peasantry, such as that of Sweden, Denmark, Bavaria, or Switzerland, has associated with its needful industry a quite studied school of pleasurable art in dress; and generally also in song, and simple domestic architecture.

Again, I need not repeat to you here what I endeavoured to explain in the first lecture in the book I called "The Two Paths," respecting the arts of savage races: but I may now note briefly that such arts are the result of an intellectual activity which has found no room to expand, and which the tyranny of nature or of man has condemned to disease through arrested growth. And where neither Christianity, nor any other religion conveying some moral help, has reached, the animal energy of such races

necessarily flames into ghastly conditions of evil, and the grotesque or frightful forms assumed by their art are precisely indicative of their distorted moral nature.

But the truly great nations nearly always begin from a race possessing this imaginative power; and for some time their progress is very slow, and their state not one of innocence, but of feverish and faultful animal energy. This is gradually subdued and exalted into bright human life; the art instinct purifying itself with the rest of the nature, until social perfectness is nearly reached; and then comes the period when conscience and intellect are so highly developed, that new forms of error begin in the inability to fulfil the demands of the one, or to answer the doubts of the other. Then the wholeness of the people is lost; all kinds of hypocrisies and oppositions of science develope themselves; their faith is questioned on one side, and compromised with on the other; wealth commonly increases at the same period to a destructive extent; luxury follows; and the ruin of the nation is then certain: while the arts, all this time, are simply, as I said at first, the exponents of each phase of its moral state, and no more control it in its political career than the gleam of the firefly guides its oscillation. It is true that their most splendid results are usually obtained in the swiftness of

the power which is hurrying to the precipice; but to lay the charge of the catastrophe to the art by which it is illumined, is to find a cause for the cataract in the hues of its iris. It is true that the colossal vices belonging to periods of great national wealth (for wealth, you will find, is the real root of all evil) can turn every good gift and skill of nature or of man to evil purpose. If, in such times, fair pictures have been misused, how much more fair realities? And if Miranda is immoral to Caliban, is that Miranda's fault?

And I could easily go on to trace for you what, at the moment I speak, is signified, in our own national character, by the forms of art, and unhappily also by the forms of what is not art, but ἀτεχνία, that exist among us. But the more important question is, What *will* be signified by them; what is there in us now of worth and strength which, under our new and partly accidental impulse towards formative labour, may be by that expressed, and by that fortified?

Would it not be well to know this? Nay, irrespective of all future work, is it not the first thing we should want to know, what stuff we are made of — how far we are ἀγαθοὶ or κακοὶ — good, or good for nothing? We may all know that, each of ourselves, easily enough, if we like to put one grave question well home.

Supposing it were told any of you by a physician whose word you could not but trust, that you had not more than seven days to live. And suppose also that, by the manner of your education it had happened to you, as it has happened to many, never to have heard of any future state, or not to have credited what you heard; and therefore that you had to face this fact of the approach of death in its simplicity: fearing no punishment for any sin that you might have before committed, or in the coming days might determine to commit; and having similarly no hope of reward for past, or yet possible, virtue; nor even of any consciousness whatever to be left to you, after the seventh day had ended, either of the results of your acts to those whom you loved, or of the feelings of any survivors towards you. Then the manner in which you would spend the seven days is an exact measure of the morality of your nature.

I know that some of you, and I believe the greater number of you, would, in such a case, spend the granted days entirely as you ought. Neither in numbering the errors, or deploring the pleasures of the past; nor in grasping at vile good in the present, nor vainly lamenting the darkness of the future; but in instant and earnest execution of whatever it might be possible for you to accomplish in the time, in setting your affairs in order, and in providing for

the future comfort, and — so far as you might by any message or record of yourself — for the consolation of those whom you loved, and by whom you desired to be remembered, not for your good, but for theirs. How far you might fail through human weakness, in shame for the past, despair at the little that could in the remnant of life be accomplished, or the intolerable pain of broken affection, would depend wholly on the degree in which your nature had been depressed or fortified by the manner of your past life. But I think there are few of you who would not spend those last days better than all that had preceded them.

If you look accurately through the records of the lives that have been most useful to humanity, you will find that all that has been done best, has been done so; — that to the clearest intellects and highest souls, — to the true children of the Father, with whom a thousand years are as one day, their poor seventy years are but as seven days. The removal of the shadow of death from them to an uncertain, but always narrow, distance, never takes away from them their intuition of its approach; the extending to them of a few hours more or less of light abates not their acknowledgment of the infinitude that must remain to be known beyond their knowledge, — done beyond their deeds: the unprofitableness of their momentary service

is wrought in a magnificent despair, and their very honour is bequeathed by them for the joy of others, as they lie down to their rest, regarding for themselves the voice of men no more.

The best things, I repeat to you, have been done thus, and therefore, sorrowfully. But the greatest part of the good work of the world is done either in pure and unvexed instinct in duty, "I have stubbed Thornaby waste," or else, and better, it is cheerful and helpful doing of what the hand finds to do, in surety that at evening time, whatsoever is right, the Master will give. And that it be worthily done, depends wholly on that ultimate quantity of worth which you can measure, each in himself, by the test I have just given you. For that test, observe, will mark to you the precise force, first of your absolute courage, and then of the energy in you for the right ordering of things, and the kindly dealing with persons. You have cut away from these two instincts every selfish or common motive, and left nothing but the energies of Order and of Love.

Now, where those two roots are set, all the other powers and desires find right nourishment, and become to their own utmost, helpful to others and pleasurable to ourselves. And so far as those two springs of action are not in us, all other powers become corrupt or dead; even the love of truth, apart from these, hardens

into an insolent and cold avarice of knowledge, which unused, is more vain than unused gold.

These, then, are the two essential instincts of humanity: the love of Order and the love of Kindness. By the love of order the moral energy is to deal with the earth, and to dress it, and keep it; and with all rebellious and dissolute forces in lower creatures, or in ourselves. By the love of doing kindness it is to deal rightly with all surrounding life. And then, grafted on these, we are to make every other passion perfect; so that they may every one have full strength and yet be absolutely under control.

Every one must be strong, every one perfect, every one obedient as a war horse. And it is among the most beautiful pieces of mysticism to which eternal truth is attached, that the chariot race, which Plato uses as an image of moral government, and which is indeed the most perfect type of it in any visible skill of men, should have been made by the Greeks the continual subject of their best poetry and best art. Nevertheless, Plato's use of it is not altogether true. There is no black horse in the chariot of the soul. One of the driver's worst faults is in starving his horses; another, in not breaking them early enough; but they are all good. Take, for example, one usually thought of as wholly evil — that of Anger, leading to vengeance. I believe it to be quite one

of the crowning wickednesses of this age that we have starved and chilled our faculty of indignation, and neither desire nor dare to punish crime justly. We have taken up the benevolent idea, forsooth, that justice is to be preventive instead of vindictive; and we imagine that we are to punish, not in anger, but in expediency; not that we may give deserved pain to the person in fault, but that we may frighten other people from committing the same fault. The beautiful theory of this non-vindictive justice is, that having convicted a man of a crime worthy of death, we entirely pardon the criminal, restore him to his place in our affection and esteem, and then hang him, not as a malefactor, but as a scarecrow. That is the theory. And the practice is, that we send a child to prison for a month for stealing a handful of walnuts, for fear that other children should come to steal more of our walnuts. And we do not punish a swindler for ruining a thousand families, because we think swindling is a wholesome excitement to trade.

But all true justice is vindictive to vice as it is rewarding to virtue. Only — and herein it is distinguished from personal revenge — it is vindictive of the wrong done, not of the wrong done *to us*. It is the national expression of deliberate anger, as of deliberate gratitude; it is not exemplary, or even corrective, but

essentially retributive; it is the absolute art of measured recompense, giving honour where honour is due, and shame where shame is due, and joy where joy is due, and pain where pain is due. It is neither educational, for men are to be educated by wholesome habit, not by rewards and punishments; nor is it preventive, for it is to be executed without regard to any consequences; but only for righteousness' sake, a righteous nation does judgment and justice. But in this, as in all other instances, the rightness of the secondary passion depends on its being grafted on those two primary instincts, the love of order and of kindness, so that indignation itself is against the wounding of love. Do you think the μῆνις Ἀχιλῆος came of a hard heart in Achilles, or the "Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas," of a hard heart in Anchises' son?

And now, if with this clue through the labyrinth of them, you remember the course of the arts of great nations, you will perceive that whatever has prospered, and become lovely, had its beginning — for no other was possible — in the love of order in material things associated with true δικαιοσύνη, and the desire of beauty in material things, which is associated with true affection, *charitas;* and with the innumerable conditions of true gentleness expressed by the different uses of the words χάρις and *gratia.* You will find that this love of beauty is an es-

sential part of all healthy human nature, and though it can long co-exist with states of life in many other respects unvirtuous, it is itself wholly good; — the direct adversary of envy, avarice, mean worldly care, and especially of cruelty. It entirely perishes when these are wilfully indulged; and the men in whom it has been most strong have always been compassionate, and lovers of justice, and the earliest discerners and declarers of things conducive to the happiness of mankind.

Nearly every important truth respecting the love of beauty in its familiar relations to human life was mythically expressed by the Greeks in their various accounts of the parentage and offices of the Graces. But one fact, the most vital of all, they could not in its fulness perceive, namely, that the intensity of other perceptions of beauty is exactly commensurate with the imaginative purity of the passion of love, and with the singleness of its devotion. They were not fully conscious of, and could not therefore either mythically or philosophically express, the deep relation within themselves between their power of perceiving beauty, and the honour of domestic affection which found their sternest themes of tragedy in the infringement of its laws; —which made the rape of Helen the chief subject of their epic poetry, and which fastened their clearest symbolism of

resurrection on the story of Alcestis. Unhappily, the subordinate position of their most revered women, and the partial corruption of feeling towards them by the presence of certain other singular states of inferior passion which it is as difficult as grievous to analyse, arrested the ethical as well as the formative progress of the Greek mind; and it was not until after an interval of nearly two thousand years of various error and pain, that, partly as the true reward of Christian warfare nobly sustained through centuries of trial, and partly as the visionary culmination of the faith which saw in a maiden's purity the link between God and her race, the highest and holiest strength of mortal love was reached; and, together with it, in the song of Dante, and the painting of Bernard of Luino and his fellows, the perception, and embodiment for ever of "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report";—that, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, men might think on those things.

You probably observed the expression I used a moment ago, the *imaginative* purity of the passion of love. I have not yet spoken, nor is it possible for me to-day to speak adequately, of the moral power of the imagination: but you may for yourselves enough discern its nature merely by comparing the dignity of the relations

between the sexes, from their lowest level in moths or mollusca, through the higher creatures in whom they become a domestic influence and law, up to the love of pure men and women; and, finally, to the ideal love which animated chivalry. Throughout this vast ascent it is the gradual increase of the imaginative faculty which exalts and enlarges the authority of the passion until, at its height, it is the bulwark of patience, the tutor of honour, and the perfectness of praise.

You will find farther, that as of love, so of all the other passions, the right government and exaltation begins in that of the Imagination, which is lord over them. For to *subdue* the passions, which is thought so often to be the sum of duty respecting them, is possible enough to a proud dulness; but to *excite* them rightly, and make them strong for good, is the work of the unselfish imagination. It is constantly said that human nature is heartless. Do not believe it. Human nature is kind and generous; but it is narrow and blind; and can only with difficulty conceive anything but what it immediately sees and feels. People would instantly care for others as well as themselves if only they could *imagine* others as well as themselves. Let a child fall into the river before the roughest man's eyes;—he will usually do what he can to get it out, even at some risk to

himself; and all the town will triumph in the saving of one little life. Let the same man be shown that hundreds of children are dying of fever for want of some sanitary measure which it will cost him trouble to urge, and he will make no effort; and probably all the town would resist him if he did. So, also, the lives of many deserving women are passed in a succession of petty anxieties about themselves, and gleaming of minute interests and mean pleasures in their immediate circle, because they are never taught to make any effort to look beyond it; or to know anything about the mighty world in which their lives are fading, like blades of bitter grass in fruitless fields.

I had intended to enlarge on this — and yet more on the kingdom which every man holds in his conceptive faculty, to be peopled with active thoughts and lovely presences, or left waste for the springing up of those dark desires and dreams of which it is written that "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is evil continually." True, and a thousand times true it is, that, here at least, "greater is he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." But this you can partly follow out for yourselves without help, partly we must leave it for future enquiry. I press to the conclusion which I wish to leave with you, that all you can rightly do, or honourably become, depends on the

government of these two instincts of order and kindness, by this great Imaginative faculty, which gives you inheritance of the past, grasp of the present, authority over the future. Map out the spaces of your possible lives by its help; measure the range of their possible agency! On the walls and towers of this your fair city, there is not an ornament of which the first origin may not be traced back to the thoughts of men who died two thousand years ago. Whom will *you* be governing by your thoughts, two thousand years hence? Think of it, and you will find that so far from art being immoral, little else except art is moral; that life without industry is guilt, and industry without art is brutality; and for the words "good" and "wicked," used of men, you may almost substitute the words "Makers" or "Destroyers." Far the greater part of the seeming prosperity of the world is, so far as our present knowledge extends, vain: wholly useless for any kind of good, but having assigned to it a certain inevitable sequence of destruction and of sorrow. Its stress is only the stress of wandering storm; its beauty the hectic of plague: and what is called the history of mankind is too often the record of the whirlwind, and the map of the spreading of the leprosy. But underneath all that, or in narrow spaces of dominion in the midst of it, the work of every man, "qui non

accepit in vanitatem animam suam," endures and prospers; a small remnant or green bud of it prevailing at last over evil. And though faint with sickness, and encumbered in ruin, the true workers redeem inch by inch the wilderness into garden ground; by the help of their joined hands the order of all things is surely sustained and vitally expanded, and although with strange vacillation, in the eyes of the watcher, the morning cometh, and also the night, there is no hour of human existence that does not draw on towards the perfect day.

And perfect the day shall be, when it is of all men understood that the beauty of Holiness must be in labour as well as in rest. Nay! *more*, if it may be, in labour; in our strength, rather than in our weakness; and in the choice of what we shall work for through the six days, and may know to be good at their evening time, than in the choice of what we pray for on the seventh, of reward or repose. With the multitude that keep holiday, we may perhaps sometimes vainly have gone up to the house of the Lord, and vainly there asked for what we fancied would be mercy; but for the few who labour as their Lord would have them the mercy needs no seeking, and their wide home no hallowing. Surely goodness and mercy shall *follow* them *all* the days of their life; and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord—FOR EVER.

The Mystery of Life

The Mystery of Life

LECTURE DELIVERED IN THE THEATRE OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, DUBLIN, 1868

WHEN I accepted the privilege of addressing you to-day, I was not aware of a restriction with respect to the topics of discussion which may be brought before this Society*—a restriction which, though entirely wise and right under the circumstances contemplated in its introduction, would necessarily have disabled me, thinking as I think, from preparing any lecture for you on the subject of art in a form which might be permanently useful. Pardon me, therefore, in so far as I must transgress such limitation; for indeed my infringement will be of the letter—not of the spirit—of your commands. In whatever I may say touching the religion which has been the foundation of art, or the policy which has contributed to its power,

* That no reference should be made to religious questions.

if I offend one, I shall offend all; for I shall take no note of any separations in creeds, or antagonisms in parties: neither do I fear that ultimately I shall offend any, by proving — or at least stating as capable of positive proof — the connection of all that is best in the crafts and arts of man, with the simplicity of his faith, and the sincerity of his patriotism.

But I speak to you under another disadvantage, by which I am checked in frankness of utterance, not here only, but everywhere; namely, that I am never fully aware how far my audiences are disposed to give me credit for real knowledge of my subject, or how far they grant me attention only because I have been sometimes thought an ingenious or pleasant essayist upon it. For I have had what, in many respects, I boldly call the misfortune, to set my words sometimes prettily together; not without a foolish vanity in the poor knack that I had of doing so; until I was heavily punished for this pride, by finding that many people thought of the words only, and cared nothing for their meaning. Happily, therefore, the power of using such pleasant language — if indeed it ever were mine — is passing away from me; and whatever I am now able to say at all, I find myself forced to say with great plainness. For my thoughts have changed also, as my words have; and whereas in earlier life, what little

influence I obtained was due perhaps chiefly to the enthusiasm with which I was able to dwell on the beauty of the physical clouds, and of their colours in the sky; so all the influence I now desire to retain must be due to the earnestness with which I am endeavouring to trace the form and beauty of another kind of cloud than those; the bright cloud, of which it is written —

"What is your life? It is even as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

I suppose few people reach the middle or latter period of their age, without having, at some moment of change or disappointment, felt the truth of those bitter words; and been startled by the fading of the sunshine from the cloud of their life, into the sudden agony of the knowledge that the fabric of it was as fragile as a dream, and the endurance of it as transient as the dew. But it is not always that, even at such times as melancholy surprise, we can enter into any true perception that this human life shares, in the nature of it, not only the evanescence, but the mystery of the cloud; that its avenues are wreathed in darkness, and its forms and courses no less fantastic, than spectral and obscure; so that not only in the vanity which we cannot grasp, but in the shadow which we cannot pierce, it is true of this cloudy

life of ours, that "man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain."

And least of all, whatever may have been the eagerness of our passions, or the height of our pride, are we able to understand in its depth the third and most solemn character in which our life is like those clouds of heaven; that to it belongs not only their transience, not only their mystery, but also their power; that in the cloud of the human soul there is a fire stronger than the lightning, and a grace more precious than the rain; and that though of the good and evil it shall one day be said alike, that the place that knew them knows them no more, there is an infinite separation between those whose brief presence had there been a blessing, like the mist of Eden that went up from the earth to water the garden, and those whose place knew them only as a drifting and changeful shade, of whom the heavenly sentence is, that they are "wells without water; clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever?"

To those among us, however, who have lived long enough to form some just estimate of the rate of the changes which are, hour by hour in accelerating catastrophe, manifesting themselves in the laws, the arts, and the creeds of men, it seems to me, that now at least, if never at any former time, the thoughts of the true

nature of our life, and of its powers and responsibilities, should present themselves with absolute sadness and sternness.

And although I know that this feeling is much deepened in my own mind by disappointment, which, by chance, has attended the greater number of my cherished purposes, I do not for that reason distrust the feeling itself, though I am on my guard against an exaggerated degree of it: nay, I rather believe that in periods of new effort and violent change, disappointment is a wholesome medicine; and that in the secret of it, as in the twilight so beloved by Titian, we may see the colours of things with deeper truth than in the most dazzling sunshine. And because these truths about the works of men, which I want to bring to-day before you, are most of them sad ones, though at the same time helpful; and because also I believe that your kind Irish hearts will answer more gladly to the truthful expression of a personal feeling, than to the exposition of an abstract principle, I will permit myself so much unreserved speaking of my own causes of regret, as may enable you to make just allowance for what, according to your sympathies, you will call either the bitterness, or the insight, of a mind which has surrendered its best hopes, and been foiled in its favourite aims.

I spent the ten strongest years of my life,

(from twenty to thirty,) in endeavouring to show the excellence of the work of the man whom I believed, and rightly believed, to be the greatest painter of the schools of England since Reynolds. I had then perfect faith in the power of every great truth or beauty to prevail ultimately, and take its right place in usefulness and honour; and I strove to bring the painter's work into this due place, while the painter was yet alive. But he knew, better than I, the uselessness of talking about what people could not see for themselves. He always discouraged me scornfully, even when he thanked me — and he died before even the superficial effect of my work was visible. I went on, however, thinking I could at least be of use to the public, if not to him, in proving his power. My books got talked about a little. The prices of modern pictures, generally, rose, and I was beginning to take some pleasure in a sense of gradual victory, when, fortunately or unfortunately, an opportunity of perfect trial undeceived me at once, and for ever. The Trustees of the National Gallery commissioned me to arrange the Turner drawings there, and permitted me to prepare three hundred examples of his studies from nature, for exhibition at Kensington. At Kensington they were and are placed for exhibition; but they are not ex-

hibited, for the room in which they hang is always empty.

Well — this showed me at once, that those ten years of my life had been, in their chief purpose, lost. For that, I did not so much care; I had, at least, learned my own business thoroughly, and should be able, as I fondly supposed, after such a lesson, now to use my knowledge with better effect. But what I did care for, was the — to me frightful — discovery, that the most splendid genius in the arts might be permitted by Providence to labour and perish uselessly; that in the very fineness of it there might be something rendering it invisible to ordinary eyes; but, that with this strange excellence, faults might be mingled which would be as deadly as its virtues were vain; that the glory of it was perishable, as well as invisible, and the gift and grace of it might be to us, as snow in summer, and as rain in harvest.

That was the first mystery of life to me. But, while my best energy was given to the study of painting, I had put collateral effort, more prudent, if less enthusiastic, into that of architecture; and in this I could not complain of meeting with no sympathy. Among several personal reasons which caused me to desire that I might give this, my closing lecture on the subject of art here, in Ireland, one of the chief

was, that in reading it, I should stand near the beautiful building,— the engineers' school of your college,— which was the first realisation I had the joy to see, of the principles I had, until then, been endeavouring to teach; but which alas, is now, to me, no more than the richly canopied monument of one of the most earnest souls that ever gave itself to the arts, and one of my truest and most loving friends, Benjamin Woodward. Nor was it here in Ireland only that I received the help of Irish sympathy and genius. When, to another friend, Sir Thomas Deane, with Mr. Woodward, was entrusted the building of the museum at Oxford, the best details of the work were executed by sculptors who had been born and trained here; and the first window of the façade of the building, in which was inaugurated the study of natural science in England, in true fellowship with literature, was carved from my design by an Irish sculptor.

You may perhaps think that no man ought to speak of disappointment, to whom, even in one branch of labour, so much success was granted. Had Mr. Woodward now been beside me, I had not so spoken; but his gentle and passionate spirit was cut off from the fulfilment of its purposes, and the work we did together is now become vain. It may not be so in future; but the architecture we endeavoured to intro-

duce is inconsistent alike with the reckless luxury, the deforming mechanism, and the squalid misery of modern cities; among the formative fashions of the day, aided, especially in England, by ecclesiastical sentiment, it indeed obtained notoriety; and sometimes behind an engine furnace, or a railroad bank, you may detect the pathetic discord of its momentary grace, and, with toil, decipher its floral carvings choked with soot. I felt answerable to the schools I loved, only for their injury. I perceived that this new portion of my strength had also been spent in vain; and from amidst streets of iron, and palaces of crystal, shrank back at last to the carving of the mountain and colour of the flower.

And still I could tell of failure, and failure repeated as years went on; but I have trespassed enough on your patience to show you, in part, the causes of my discouragement. Now let me more deliberately tell you its results. You know there is a tendency in the minds of many men, when they are heavily disappointed in the main purposes of their life, to feel, and perhaps in warning, perhaps in mockery, to declare, that life itself is a vanity. Because it has disappointed them, they think its nature is of disappointment always, or at best, of pleasure that can be grasped by imagination only; that the cloud of it has no strength

nor fire within; but is a painted cloud only, to be delighted in, yet despised. You know how beautifully Pope has expressed this particular phase of thought: —

"Meanwhile opinion gilds, with varying rays,
These painted clouds that beautify our days;
Each want of happiness by hope supplied,
And each vacuity of sense, by pride.

"Hope builds as fast as Knowledge can destroy;
In Folly's cup, still laughs the bubble joy.
One pleasure past, another still we gain,
And not a vanity is given in vain."

But the effect of failure upon my own mind has been just the reverse of this. The more that my life disappointed me, the more solemn and wonderful it became to me. It seemed, contrarily to Pope's saying, that the vanity of it *was* indeed given in vain; but that there was something behind the veil of it, which was not vanity. It became to me not a painted cloud, but a terrible and impenetrable one: not a mirage, which vanished as I drew near, but a pillar of darkness, to which I was forbidden to draw near. For I saw that both my own failure, and such success in petty things as in its poor triumph seemed to me worse than failure, came from the want of sufficiently earnest effort

to understand the whole law and meaning of existence, and to bring it to noble and due end; as, on the other hand, I saw more and more clearly that all enduring success in the arts, or in any other occupation, had come from the ruling of lower purposes, not by a conviction of their nothingness, but by a solemn faith in the advancing power of human nature, or in the promise, however dimly apprehended, that the mortal part of it would one day be swallowed up in immortality; and that, indeed, the arts themselves never had reached any vital strength or honour but in the effort to proclaim this immortality, and in the service either of great and just religion, or of some unselfish patriotism, and law of such national life as must be the foundation of religion.

Nothing that I have ever said is more true or necessary — nothing has been more misunderstood or misapplied — than my strong assertion, that the arts can never be right themselves, unless their motive is right. It is misunderstood this way: weak painters, who have never learned their business, and cannot lay a true line, continually come to me, crying out — "Look at this picture of mine; it *must* be good, I had such a lovely motive. I have put my whole heart into it, and taken years to think over its treatment." Well, the only answer for these people is — if one had the cruelty to make it —

"Sir, you cannot think over *any*thing in any number of years,—you haven't the head to do it; and though you had fine motives, strong enough to make you burn yourself in a slow fire, if only first you could paint a picture, you can't paint one, nor half an inch of you; you haven't the hand to do it."

But, far more decisively we have to say to the men who *do* know their business, or may know it if they choose—"Sir, you have this gift and a mighty one; see that you serve your nation faithfully with it. It is a greater trust than ships and armies: you might cast *them* away, if you were their captain, with less treason to your people than in casting your own glorious power away, and serving the devil with it instead of men. Ships and armies you may replace if they are lost, but a great intellect, once abused, is a curse to the earth for ever."

This, then, I meant by saying that the arts must have noble motive. This also I said respecting them, that they never had prospered, nor could prosper, but when they had such true purpose, and were devoted to the proclamation of divine truth or law. And yet I saw also that they had always failed in this proclamation—that poetry, and sculpture, and painting, though only great when they strove to teach us something about the gods, never had taught us anything trustworthy about the gods, but had always

betrayed their trust in the crisis of it, and, with their powers at the full reach, became ministers to pride and to lust. And I felt also, with increasing amazement, the unconquerable apathy in ourselves the hearers, no less than in these the teachers; and that, while the wisdom and rightness of every act and art of life could only be consistent with a right understanding of the ends of life, we were all plunged as in a languid dream — our heart fat, and our eyes heavy, and our ears closed, lest the inspiration of hand or voice should reach us — lest we should see with our eyes, and understand with our hearts, and be healed.

This intense apathy in all of us is the first great mystery of life; it stands in the way of every perception, every virtue. There is no making ourselves feel enough astonishment at it. That the occupations or pastimes of life should have no motive, is understandable; but — That life itself should have no motive — that we neither care to find out what it may lead to, nor to guard against its being for ever taken away from us — here is a mystery indeed. For, just suppose I were able to call at this moment to any one in this audience by name, and to tell him positively that I knew a large estate had been lately left to him on some curious conditions; but that, though I knew it was large, I did not know how large, nor even where it was —

whether in the East Indies or the West, or in England, or at the Antipodes. I only knew it was a vast estate, and that there was a chance of his losing it altogether if he did not soon find out on what terms it had been left to him. Suppose I were able to say this positively to any single man in this audience, and he knew that I did not speak without warrant, do you think that he would rest content with that vague knowledge, if it were anywise possible to obtain more? Would he not give every energy to find some trace of the facts, and never rest till he had ascertained where this place was, and what it was like? And suppose he were a young man, and all he could discover by his best endeavour was, that the estate was never to be his at all, unless he persevered, during certain years of probation, in an orderly and industrious life; but that, according to the rightness of his conduct, the portion of the estate assigned to him would be greater or less, so that it literally depended on his behaviour from day to day whether he got ten thousand a year, or thirty thousand a year, or nothing whatever — would you not think it strange if the youth never troubled himself to satisfy the conditions in any way, nor even to know what was required of him, but lived exactly as he chose, and never inquired whether his chances of the estate were increasing or passing away? Well,

you know that this is actually and literally so with the greater number of the educated persons now living in Christian countries. Nearly every man and woman, in any company such as this, outwardly professes to believe — and a large number unquestionably think they believe — much more than this; not only that a quite unlimited estate is in prospect for them if they please the Holder of it, but that the infinite contrary of such a possession — an estate of perpetual misery, is in store for them if they displease this great Land-Holder, this great Heaven-Holder. And yet there is not one in a thousand of these human souls that cares to think, for ten minutes of the day, where this estate is, or how beautiful it is, or what kind of life they are to lead in it, or what kind of life they must lead to obtain it.

You fancy that you care to know this: so little do you care that, probably, at this moment many of you are displeased with me for talking of the matter! You came to hear about the Art of this world, not about the Life of the next, and you are provoked with me for talking of what you can hear any Sunday in church. But do not be afraid. I will tell you something before you go about pictures, and carvings, and pottery, and what else you would like better to hear of than the other world. Nay, perhaps you say, "We want you to talk

of pictures and pottery, because we are sure that you know something of them, and you know nothing of the other world." Well — I don't. That is quite true. But the very strangeness and mystery of which I urge you to take notice is in this — that I do not; — nor you either. Can you answer a single bold question unflinchingly about that other world — Are you sure there is a heaven? Sure there is a hell? Sure that men are dropping before your faces through the pavements of these streets into eternal fire, or sure that they are not? Sure that at your own death you are going to be delivered from all sorrow, to be endowed with all virtue, to be gifted with all felicity, and raised into perpetual companionship with a King, compared to whom the kings of the earth are as grasshoppers, and the nations as the dust of His feet? Are you sure of this? or, if not sure, do any of us so much as care to make it sure? and, if not, how can anything that we do be right — how can anything we think be wise; what honour can there be in the arts that amuse us, or what profit in the possessions that please?

Is not this a mystery of life?

But farther, you may, perhaps, think it a beneficent ordinance for the generality of men that they do not, with earnestness or anxiety, dwell on such questions of the future; because the business of the day could not be done if this

kind of thought were taken by all of us for the morrow. Be it so: but at least we might anticipate that the greatest and wisest of us, who were evidently the appointed teachers of the rest, would set themselves apart to seek out whatever could be surely known of the future destinies of their race; and to teach this in no rhetorical or ambiguous manner, but in the plainest and most severely earnest words.

Now, the highest representatives of men who have thus endeavoured, during the Christian era, to search out these deep things, and relate them, are Dante and Milton. There are none who for earnestness of thought, for mastery of word, can be classed with these. I am not at present, mind you, speaking of persons set apart in any priestly or pastoral office, to deliver creeds to us, or doctrines; but of men who try to discover and set forth, as far as by human intellect is possible, the facts of the other world. Divines may perhaps teach us how to arrive there, but only these two poets have in any powerful manner striven to discover, or in any definite words professed to tell, what we shall see and become there: or how those upper and nether worlds are, and have been, inhabited.

And what have they told us? Milton's account of the most important event in his whole system of the universe, the fall of the angels, is evidently unbelievable to himself; and the more

so, that it is wholly founded on, and in a great part spoiled and degraded from, Hesiod's account of the decisive war of the younger gods with the Titans. The rest of his poem is a picturesque drama, in which every artifice of invention is visibly and consciously employed, not a single fact being, for an instant, conceived as tenable by any living faith. Dante's conception is far more intense, and, by himself, for the time, not to be escaped from; it is indeed a vision, but a vision only, and that one of the wildest that ever entranced a soul — a dream in which every grotesque type or phantasy of heathen tradition is renewed, and adorned; and the destinies of the Christian Church, under their most sacred symbols, become literally subordinate to the praise, and are only to be understood by the aid, of one dear Florentine maiden.

I tell you truly that, as I strive more with this strange lethargy and trance in myself, and awake to the meaning and power of life, it seems daily more amazing to me that men such as these should dare to play with the most precious truths (or the most deadly untruths), by which the whole human race listening to them could be informed, or deceived; — all the world their audiences for ever, with pleased ear, and passionate heart; — and yet, to this submissive infinitude of souls, and evermore suc-

ceeding and succeeding multitude, hungry for bread of life, they do but play upon sweetly modulated pipes; with pompous nomenclature adorn the councils of hell; touch a troubadour's guitar to the courses of the suns; and fill the openings of eternity, before which prophets have veiled their faces, and which angels desire to look into, with idle puppets of their scholastic imagination, and melancholy lights of frantic faith in their lost mortal love.

Is not this a mystery of life?

But more. We have to remember that these two great teachers were both of them warped in their temper, and thwarted in their search for truth. They were men of intellectual war, unable, through darkness of controversy, or stress of personal grief, to discern where their own ambition modified their utterances of the moral law; or their own agony mingled with their anger at its violation. But greater men than these have been — innocent-hearted — too great for contest. Men, like Homer and Shakespeare, of so unrecognised personality, that it disappears in future ages, and becomes ghostly, like the tradition of a lost heathen god. Men, therefore, to whose unoffended, uncondemning sight, the whole of human nature reveals itself in a pathetic weakness, with which they will not strive; or in mournful and transitory strength, which they dare not praise. And all

Pagan and Christian civilisation thus becomes subject to them. It does not matter how little, or how much, any of us have read, either of Homer or Shakespeare: everything round us, in substance, or in thought, has been moulded by them. All Greek gentlemen were educated under Homer. All Roman gentlemen, by Greek literature. All Italian, and French, and English gentlemen, by Roman literature, and by its principles. Of the scope of Shakespeare, I will say only, that the intellectual measure of every man since born, in the domains of creative thought, may be assigned to him, according to the degree in which he has been taught by Shakespeare. Well, what do these two men, centres of moral intelligence, deliver to us of conviction respecting what it most behoves that intelligence to grasp? What is their hope; their crown of rejoicing? what manner of exhortation have they for us, or of rebuke? what lies next their own hearts, and dictates their undying words? Have they any peace to promise to our unrest — any redemption to our misery?

Take Homer first, and think if there is any sadder image of human fate than the great Homeric story. The main features in the character of Achilles are its intense desire of justice, and its tenderness of affection. And in that bitter song of the Iliad, this man, though aided

continually by the wisest of the gods, and burning with the desire of justice in his heart, becomes yet, through ill-governed passion, the most unjust of men: and, full of the deepest tenderness in his heart, becomes yet through ill-governed passion, the most cruel of men. Intense alike in love and in friendship, he loses, first his mistress, and then his friend; for the sake of the one, he surrenders to death the armies of his own land; for the sake of the other, he surrenders all. Will a man lay down his life for his friend? Yea — even for his *dead* friend, this Achilles, though goddess-born, and goddess-taught, gives up his kingdom, his country, and his life — casts alike the innocent and guilty, with himself, into one gulf of slaughter, and dies at last by the hand of the basest of his adversaries. Is not this a mystery of life?

But what, then, is the message to us of our own poet, and searcher of hearts, after fifteen hundred years of Christian faith have been numbered over the graves of men? Are his words more cheerful than the heathen's — is his hope more near — his trust more sure — his reading of fate more happy? Ah, no! He differs from the heathen poet chiefly in this — that he recognises, for deliverance, no gods nigh at hand; and that, by petty chance — by momentary folly — by broken message — by fool's tyranny

—or traitor's snare, the strongest and most righteous are brought to their ruin, and perish without word of hope. He indeed, as part of his rendering of character, ascribes the power and modesty of habitual devotion, to the gentle and the just. The death-bed of Katharine is bright with vision of angels; and the great soldier-king, standing by his few dead, acknowledges the presence of the hand that can save alike by many or by few. But observe that from those who with deepest spirit, meditate, and with deepest passion, mourn, there are no such words as these; nor in their hearts are any such consolations. Instead of the perpetual sense of the helpful presence of the Deity, which, through all heathen tradition, is the source of heroic strength, in battle, in exile, and in the valley of the shadow of death, we find only in the great Christian poet, the consciousness of a moral law, through which "the gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us;" and of the resolved arbitration of the destinies, that conclude into precision of doom what we feebly and blindly began; and force us, when our indiscretion serves us, and our deepest plots do pall, to the confession, that "there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will."

Is not this a mystery of life?

Be it so then. About this human life that is

to be, or that is, the wise religious men tell us nothing that we can trust; and the wise contemplative men, nothing that can give us peace. But there is yet a third class, to whom we may turn — the wise practical men. We have sat at the feet of the poets who sang of heaven, and they have told us their dreams. We have listened to the poets who sang of earth, and they have chanted to us dirges, and words of despair. But there is one class of men more: — men, not capable of vision, nor sensitive to sorrow, but firm of purpose — practised in business: learned in all that can be, (by handling,—) known. Men whose hearts and hopes are wholly in this present world, from whom, therefore, we may surely learn, at least, how, at present, conveniently to live in it. What will *they* say to us, or show us by example? These kings — these councillors — these statesmen and builders of kingdoms — these capitalists and men of business, who weigh the earth, and the dust of it, in a balance. They know the world, surely; and what is the mystery of life to us, is none to them. They can surely show us how to live, while we live, and to gather out of the present world what is best.

I think I can best tell you their answer, by telling you a dream I had once. For though I am no poet, I have dreams sometimes: — I dreamed I was at a child's May-day party, in

which every means of entertainment had been provided for them, by a wise and kind host. It was in a stately house, with beautiful gardens attached to it; and the children had been set free in the rooms and gardens, with no care whatever but how to pass their afternoon rejoicingly. They did not, indeed, know much about what was to happen next day; and some of them, I thought, were a little frightened, because there was a chance of their being sent to a new school where there were examinations; but they kept the thoughts of that out of their heads as well as they could, and resolved to enjoy themselves. The house, I said, was in a beautiful garden, and in the garden were all kinds of flowers; sweet grassy banks for rest; and smooth lawns for play; and pleasant streams and woods; and rocky places for climbing. And the children were happy for a little while, but presently they separated themselves into parties; and then each party declared, it would have a piece of the garden for its own, and that none of the others should have anything to do with that piece. Next, they quarrelled violently, which pieces they would have; and at last the boys took up the thing, as boys should do, "practically," and fought in the flower-beds till there was hardly a flower left standing; then they trampled down each other's bits of the garden out of spite; and the

girls cried till they could cry no more; and so they all lay down at last breathless in the ruin, and waited for the time when they were to be taken home in the evening.*

Meanwhile, the children in the house had been making themselves happy also in their manner. For them, there had been provided every kind of in-doors pleasure: there was music for them to dance to; and the library was open, with all manner of amusing books; and there was a museum, full of the most curious shells, and animals, and birds; and there was a workshop, with lathes and carpenters' tools, for the ingenious boys; and there were pretty fantastic dresses, for the girls to dress in; and there were microscopes, and kaleidoscopes; and whatever toys a child could fancy; and a table, in the dining-room, loaded with everything nice to eat.

But, in the midst of all this, it struck two or three of the more "practical" children, that they would like some of the brass-headed nails that studded the chairs; and so they set to work to pull them out. Presently, the others, who were reading, or looking at shells, took a fancy to do the like; and, in a little while, all

* I have sometimes been asked what this means. I intended it to set forth the wisdom of men in war contending for kingdoms, and what follows to set forth their wisdom in peace, contending for wealth.

the children, nearly, were spraining their fingers, in pulling out brass-headed nails. With all that they could pull out, they were not satisfied; and then, everybody wanted some of somebody else's. And at last the really practical and sensible ones declared, that nothing was of any real consequence, that afternoon, except to get plenty of brass-headed nails; and that the books, and the cakes, and the microscopes were of no use at all in themselves, but only, if they could be exchanged for nail-heads. And, at last, they began to fight for nail-heads, as the others fought for the bits of garden. Only here and there, a despised one shrank away into a corner, and tried to get a little quiet with a book, in the midst of the noise; but all the practical ones thought of nothing else but counting nail-heads all the afternoon — even though they knew they would not be allowed to carry so much as one brass knob away with them. But no — it was — "who has most nails? I have a hundred and you have fifty; or I have a thousand and you have two. I must have as many as you before I leave the house, or I cannot possibly go home in peace." At last, they made so much noise that I awoke, and thought to myself, "What a false dream that is, of *children*." The child is the father of the man; and wiser. Children never do such foolish things. Only men do.

But there is yet one last class of persons to be interrogated. The wise religious men we have asked in vain; the wise contemplative men, in vain; the wise worldly men, in vain. But there is another group yet. In the midst of this vanity of empty religion — of tragic contemplation — of wrathful and wretched ambition, and dispute for dust, there is yet one great group of persons, by whom all these disputers live — the persons who have determined, or have had it by a beneficent Providence determined for them, that they will do something useful; that whatever may be prepared for them hereafter, or happen to them here, they will, at least, deserve the food that God gives them by winning it honourably; and that, however fallen from the purity, or far from the peace, of Eden, they will carry out the duty of human dominion, though they have lost its felicity; and dress and keep the wilderness, though they no more can dress or keep the garden.

These,— hewers of wood, and drawers of water — these bent under burdens, or torn of scourges — these, that dig and weave — that plant and build; workers in wood, and in marble, and in iron — by whom all food, clothing, habitation, furniture, and means of delight are produced, for themselves, and for all men beside; men, whose deeds are good, though their words may be few; men, whose lives are

serviceable, be they never so short, and worthy of honour, be they never so humble; — from these, surely at least, we may receive some clear message of teaching: and pierce, for an instant, into the mystery of life, and of its arts.

Yes; from these, at last, we do receive a lesson. But I grieve to say, or rather — for that is the deeper truth of the matter — I rejoice to say — this message of theirs can only be received by joining them — not by thinking about them.

You sent for me to talk to you of art; and I have obeyed you in coming. But the main thing I have to tell you is, — that art must not be talked about. The fact that there is talk about it at all, signifies that it is ill done, or cannot be done. No true painter ever speaks, or ever has spoken, much of his art. The greatest speak nothing. Even Reynolds is no exception, for he wrote of all that he could not himself do, and was utterly silent respecting all that he himself did.

The moment a man can really do his work, he becomes speechless about it. All words become idle to him — all theories.

Does a bird need to theorise about building its nest, or boast of it when built? All good work is essentially done that way — without hesitation, without difficulty, without boasting; and in the doers of the best, there is an inner and involun-

tary power which approximates literally to the instinct of an animal — nay, I am certain that in the most perfect human artists, reason does *not* supersede instinct, but is added to an instinct as much more divine than that of the lower animals as the human body is more beautiful than theirs; that a great singer sings not with less instinct than the nightingale, but with more — only more various, applicable, and governable; that a great architect does not build with less instinct than the beaver or the bee, but with more — with an innate cunning of proportion that embraces all beauty, and a divine ingenuity of skill that improvises all construction. But be that as it may — be the instinct less or more than that of inferior animals — like or unlike theirs, still the human art is dependent on that first, and then upon an amount of practice, of science,— and of imagination disciplined by thought, which the true possessor of it knows to be incommunicable, and the true critic of it, inexplicable, except through long process of laborious years. That journey of life's conquest, in which hills over hills, and Alps on Alps arose, and sank,— do you think you can make another trace it painlessly, by talking? Why, you cannot even carry us up an Alp, by talking. You can guide us up it, step by step, no otherwise — even so, best silently. You girls, who have been among the hills, know

how the bad guide chatters and gesticulates, and it is "put your foot here," and "mind how you balance yourself there;" but the good guide walks on quietly, without a word, only with his eyes on you when need is, and his arm like an iron bar, if need be.

In that slow way, also, art can be taught — if you have faith in your guide, and will let his arm be to you as an iron bar when need is. But in what teacher of art have you such faith? Certainly not in me; for, as I told you at first, I know well enough it is only because you think I can talk, not because you think I know my business, that you let me speak to you at all. If I were to tell you anything that seemed to you strange, you would not believe it, and yet it would only be in telling you strange things that I could be of use to you. I could be of great use to you — infinite use, with brief saying, if you would believe it; but you would not, just because the thing that would be of real use would displease you. You are all wild, for instance, with admiration of Gustave Doré. Well, suppose I were to tell you in the strongest terms I could use, that Gustave Doré's art was bad — bad, not in weakness, — not in failure, — but bad with dreadful power — the power of the Furies and the Harpies mingled, enraging, and polluting; that so long as you looked at it, no perception of pure or beautiful art was

possible for you. Suppose I were to tell you that! What would be the use? Would you look at Gustave Doré less? Rather more, I fancy. On the other hand, I could soon put you into good humour with me, if I chose. I know well enough what you like, and how to praise it to your better liking. I could talk to you about moonlight, and twilight, and spring flowers, and autumn leaves, and the Madonnas of Raphael — how motherly! and the Sibyls of Michael Angelo — how majestic! and the Saints of Angelico — how pious! and the Cherubs of Correggio — how delicious! Old as I am, I could play you a tune on the harp yet, that you would dance to. But neither you nor I should be a bit the better or wiser; or, if we were, our increased wisdom could be of no practical effect. For, indeed, the arts, as regards teachableness, differ from the sciences also in this, that their power is founded not merely on facts which can be communicated, but on dispositions which require to be created. Art is neither to be achieved by effort of thinking, nor explained by accuracy of speaking. It is the instinctive and necessary result of powers which can only be developed through the mind of successive generations, and which finally burst into life under social conditions as slow of growth as the faculties they regulate. Whole æras of mighty history are summed, and the passions

of dead myriads are concentrated in the existence of a noble art; and if that noble art were among us, we should feel it and rejoice; not caring in the least to hear lectures on it; and since it is not among us, be assured we have to go back to the root of it, or, at least, to the place where the stock of it is yet alive, and the branches began to die.

And now, may I have your pardon for pointing out, partly with reference to matters which are at this time of greater moment than the arts — that if we undertook such recession to the vital germ of national arts that have decayed, we should find a more singular arrest of their power in Ireland than in any other European country. For in the eighth century, Ireland possessed a school of art in her manuscripts and sculpture, which, in many of its qualities — apparently in all essential qualities of decorative invention — was quite without rival; seeming as if it might have advanced to the highest triumphs in architecture and in painting. But there was one fatal flaw in its nature, by which it was stayed, and stayed with a conspicuousness of pause to which there is no parallel: so that, long ago, in tracing the progress of European schools from infancy to strength, I chose for the students of Kensington, in a lecture since published, two characteristic examples of early art, of equal skill; but in the one case, skill which

was progressive — in the other, skill which was at pause. In the one case, it was work receptive of correction — hungry for correction — and in the other, work which inherently rejected correction. I chose for them a corrigible Eve, and an incorrigible Angel, and I grieve to say that the incorrigible Angel was also an Irish angel! *

And the fatal difference lay wholly in this. In both pieces of art there was an equal falling short of the needs of fact; but the Lombardic Eve knew she was in the wrong, and the Irish Angel thought himself all right. The eager Lombardic sculptor, though firmly insisting on his childish idea, yet showed in the irregular broken touches of the features, and the imperfect struggle for softer lines in the form, a perception of beauty and law that he could not render; there was the strain of effort, under conscious imperfection, in every line. But the Irish missal-painter had drawn his angel with no sense of failure, in happy complacency, and put red dots into the palms of each hand, and rounded the eyes into perfect circles, and, I regret to say, left the mouth out altogether, with perfect satisfaction to himself.

May I without offence ask you to consider whether this mode of arrest in ancient Irish art may not be indicative of points of character

* See *The Two Paths*, p. 27.

which even yet, in some measure, arrest your national power? I have seen much of Irish character, and have watched it closely, for I have also much loved it. And I think the form of failure to which it is most liable is this, that being generous-hearted, and wholly intending always to do right, it does not attend to the external laws of right, but thinks it must necessarily do right because it means to do so, and therefore does wrong without finding it out: and then when the consequences of its wrong come upon it, or upon others connected with it, it cannot conceive that the wrong is in anywise of its causing or of its doing, but flies into wrath, and a strange agony of desire for justice, as feeling itself wholly innocent, which leads it farther astray, until there is nothing that it is not capable of doing with a good conscience.

But mind, I do not mean to say that, in past or present relations between Ireland and England, you have been wrong, and we right. Far from that, I believe that in all great questions of principle, and in all details of administration of law, you have been usually right, and we wrong; sometimes in misunderstanding you, sometimes in resolute iniquity to you. Nevertheless, in all disputes between states, though the strongest is nearly always mainly in the wrong, the weaker is often so in a minor degree; and I think we sometimes admit the possibility of our being in error, and you never do.

And now, returning to the broader question what these arts and labours of life have to teach us of its mystery, this is the first of their lessons — that the more beautiful the art, the more it is essentially the work of people who *feel themselves wrong;* — who are striving for the fulfilment of a law, and the grasp of a loveliness, which they have not yet attained, which they feel even farther and farther from attaining, the more they strive for it. And yet, in still deeper sense, it is the work of people who know also that they are right. The very sense of inevitable error from their purpose marks the perfectness of that purpose, and the continued sense of failure arises from the continued opening of the eyes more clearly to all the sacredest laws of truth.

This is one lesson. The second is a very plain, and greatly precious one, namely: — that whenever the arts and labours of life are fulfilled in this spirit of striving against misrule, and doing whatever we have to do, honourably and perfectly, they invariably bring happiness, as much as seems possible to the nature of man. In all other paths, by which that happiness is pursued, there is disappointment, or destruction: for ambition and for passion there is no rest — no fruition; the fairest pleasures of youth perish in a darkness greater than their past light; and the loftiest and purest love too often does but inflame the cloud of life with

endless fire of pain. But, ascending from lowest to highest, through every scale of human industry, that industry worthily followed, gives peace. Ask the labourer in the field, at the forge, or in the mine; ask the patient, delicate-fingered artisan, or the strong-armed, fiery-hearted worker in bronze, and in marble, and in the colours of light; and none of these, who are true workmen, will ever tell you, that they have found the law of heaven an unkind one—that in the sweat of their face they should eat bread, till they return to the ground; nor that they ever found it an unrewarded obedience, if, indeed, it was rendered faithfully to the command—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do—do it with thy might."

These are the two great and constant lessons which our labourers teach us of the mystery of life. But there is another, and a sadder one, which they cannot teach us, which we must read on their tombstones.

"Do it with thy might." There have been myriads upon myriads of human creatures who have obeyed this law—who have put every breath and nerve of their being into its toil—who have devoted every hour, and exhausted every faculty—who have bequeathed their unaccomplished thoughts at death—who being dead, have yet spoken, by majesty of memory, and strength of example. And, at last, what

has all this "Might" of humanity accomplished, in six thousand years of labour and sorrow? What has it *done?* Take the three chief occupations and arts of men, one by one, and count their achievements. Begin with the first—the lord of them all—agriculture. Six thousand years have passed since we were sent to till the ground, from which we were taken. How much of it is tilled? How much of that which is, wisely or well? In the very centre and chief garden of Europe—where the two forms of parent Christianity have had their fortresses—where the noble Catholics of the Forest Cantons, and the noble Protestants of the Vaudois valleys, have maintained, for dateless ages, their faiths and liberties—there the unchecked Alpine rivers yet run wild in devastation: and the marshes, which a few hundred men could redeem with a a year's labour, still blast their helpless inhabitants into fevered idiotism. That is so, in the centre of Europe! While, on the near coast of Africa, once the Garden of the Hesperides, an Arab woman, but a few sunsets since, ate her child, for famine. And, with all the treasures of the East at our feet, we, in our own dominion, could not find a few grains of rice, for a people that asked of us no more; but stood by, and saw five hundred thousand of them perish of hunger.

Then, after agriculture, the art of kings, take

the next head of human arts — weaving; the art of queens, honoured of all noble heathen women, in the person of their virgin goddess — honoured of all Hebrew women, by the word of their wisest king — "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff; she stretcheth out her hand to the poor. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself covering of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles to the merchant." What have we done in all these thousands of years with this bright art of Greek maid and Christian matron? Six thousand years of weaving, and have we learned to weave? Might not every naked wall have been purple with tapestry, and every feeble breast fenced with sweet colours from the cold? What have we done? Our fingers are too few, it seems, to twist together some poor covering for our bodies. We set our streams to work for us, and choke the air with fire, to turn our spinning-wheels — and, — *are we yet clothed?* Are not the streets of the capitals of Europe foul with the sale of cast clouts and rotten rags? Is not the beauty of your sweet children left in wretchedness of disgrace, while, with better honour, nature clothes the brood of the bird in its nest, and the suckling of the wolf in her

den? And does not every winter's snow robe what you have not robed, and shroud what you have not shrouded; and every winter's wind bear up to heaven its wasted souls, to witness against you hereafter, by the voice of their Christ,— "I was naked, and ye clothed me not?"

Lastly — take the Art of Building — the strongest — proudest — most orderly — most enduring of the arts of man, that, of which the produce is in the surest manner accumulative, and need not perish, or be replaced; but if once well done, will stand more strongly than the unbalanced rocks — more prevalently than the crumbling hills. The art which is associated with all civic pride and sacred principle; with which men record their power — satisfy their enthusiasm — make sure their defence — define and make dear their habitation. And, in six thousand years of building, what have we done? Of the greater part of all that skill and strength, *no* vestige is left, but fallen stones, that encumber the fields and impede the streams. But, from this waste of disorder, and of time, and of rage, what *is* left to us? Constructive and progressive creatures that we are, with ruling brains, and forming hands, capable of fellowship, and thirsting for fame, can we not contend, in comfort, with the insects of the forest, or, in achievement, with the worm of

the sea? The white surf rages in vain against the ramparts built by poor atoms of scarcely nascent life; but only ridges of formless ruin mark the places where once dwelt our noblest multitudes. The ant and the moth have cells for each of their young, but our little ones lie in festering heaps, in homes that consume them like graves; and night by night, from the corners of our streets, rises up the cry of the homeless — "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in."

Must it be always thus? Is our life for ever to be without profit — without possession? Shall the strength of its generations be as barren as death; or cast away their labour, as the wild fig tree casts her untimely figs? Is it all a dream then — the desire of the eyes and the pride of life — or, if it be, might we not live in nobler dream than this? The poets and prophets, the wise men, and the scribes, though they have told us nothing about a life to come, have told us much about the life that is now. They have had — they also,— their dreams, and we have laughed at them. They have dreamed of mercy, and of justice; they have dreamed of peace and good-will; they have dreamed of labour undisappointed, and of rest undisturbed; they have dreamed of fulness in harvest, and overflowing in store; they have dreamed of wisdom in council, and of providence

in law; of gladness of parents, and strength of children, and glory of grey hairs. And at these visions of theirs we have mocked, and held them for idle and vain, unreal and unaccomplishable. What have we accomplished with our realities? Is this what has come of our worldly wisdom, tried against their folly? this our mightiest possible, against their impotent ideal? or have we only wandered among the spectra of a baser felicity, and chased phantoms of the tombs, instead of visions of the Almighty; and walked after the imaginations of our evil hearts, instead of after the counsels of Eternity, until our lives — not in the likeness of the cloud of heaven, but of the smoke of hell — have become "as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away?"

Does it vanish then? Are you sure of that? — sure, that the nothingness of the grave will be a rest from this troubled nothingness; and that the coiling shadow, which disquiets itself in vain, cannot change into the smoke of the torment that ascends for ever? Will any answer that they *are* sure of it, and that there is no fear, nor hope, nor desire, nor labour, whither they go? Be it so; will you not, then, make as sure of the Life, that now is, as you are of the Death that is to come? Your hearts are wholly in this world — will you not give them to

it wisely, as well as perfectly? And see, first of all, that you *have* hearts, and sound hearts, too, to give. Because you have no heaven to look for, is that any reason that you should remain ignorant of this wonderful and infinite earth, which is firmly and instantly given you in possession? Although your days are numbered, and the following darkness sure, is it necessary that you should share the degradation of the brute, because you are condemned to its mortality; or live the life of the moth, and of the worm, because you are to companion them in the dust? Not so; we may have but a few thousands of days to spend, perhaps hundreds only — perhaps tens; nay, the longest of our time and best, looked back on, will be but as a moment, as the twinkling of an eye; still, we are men, not insects; we are living spirits, not passing clouds. "He maketh the winds His messengers; the momentary fire, His minister;" and shall we do less than *these?* Let us do the work of men while we bear the form of them; and, as we snatch our narrow portion of time out of Eternity, snatch also our narrow inheritance of passion out of Immortality — even though our lives *be* as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

But there are some of you who believe not this — who think this cloud of life has no such

close — that it is to float, revealed and illumined, upon the floor of heaven, in the day when He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him. Some day, you believe, within these five, or ten, or twenty years, for every one of us the judgment will be set, and the books opened. If that be true, far more than that must be true. Is there but one day of judgment? Why, for us every day is a day of judgment — every day is a Dies Iræ, and writes its irrevocable verdict in the flame of its West. Think you that judgment waits till the doors of the grave are opened? It waits at the doors of your houses — it waits at the corners of your streets; we are in the midst of judgment — the insects that we crush are our judges — the moments that we fret away are our judges — the elements that feed us, judge, as they minister — and the pleasures that deceive us, judge as they indulge. Let us, for our lives, do the work of Men while we bear the Form of them, if indeed those lives are *Not* as a vapour, and do *Not* vanish away.

"The work of men" — and what is that? Well, we may any of us know very quickly, on the condition of being wholly ready to do it. But many of us are for the most part thinking, not of what we are to do, but of what we are to get; and the best of us are sunk into the sin of Ananias, and it is a mortal one — we want

to keep back part of the price; and we continually talk of taking up our cross, as if the only harm in a cross was the *weight* of it — as if it was only a thing to be carried, instead of to be — crucified upon. "They that are His have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Does that mean, think you, that in time of national distress, of religious trial, of crisis for every interest and hope of humanity — none of us will cease jesting, none cease idling, none put themselves to any wholesome work, none take so much as a tag of lace off their footmen's coats, to save the world? Or does it rather mean, that they are ready to leave houses, lands, and kindreds — yes, and life, if need be? Life! — some of us are ready enough to throw that away, joyless as we have made it. But "*station* in Life" — how many of us are ready to quit *that?* Is it not always the great objection, where there is question of finding something useful to do — "We cannot leave our stations in Life?"

Those of us who really cannot — that is to say, who can only maintain themselves by continuing in some business or salaried office, have already something to do; and all that they have to see to, is that they do it honestly and with all their might. But with most people who use that apology, "remaining in the station of life to which Providence has called them,"

means keeping all the carriages, and all the footmen and large houses they can possibly pay for; and, once for all, I say that if ever Providence *did* put them into stations of that sort — which is not at all a matter of certainty — Providence is just now very distinctly calling them out again. Levi's station in life was the receipt of custom; and Peter's, the shore of Galilee; and Paul's, the antechambers of the High Priest,— which "station in life" each had to leave, with brief notice.

And, whatever our station in life may be, at this crisis, those of us who mean to fulfil our duty ought, first, to live on as little as we can; and, secondly, to do all the wholesome work for it we can, and to spend all we can spare in doing all the sure good we can.

And sure good is first in feeding people, then in dressing people, then in lodging people, and lastly in rightly pleasing people, with arts, or sciences, or any other subject of thought.

I say first in feeding; and, once for all, do not let yourselves be deceived by any of the common talk of "indiscriminate charity." The order to us is not to feed the deserving hungry, nor the industrious hungry, nor the amiable and well-intentioned hungry, but simply to feed the hungry. It is quite true, infallibly true, that if any man will not work, neither should he eat — think of that, and every time you sit

down to your dinner, ladies and gentlemen, say solemnly, before you ask a blessing, "How much work have I done to-day for my dinner?" But the proper way to enforce that order on those below you, as well as on yourselves, is not to leave vagabonds and honest people to starve together, but very distinctly to discern and seize your vagabond; and shut your vagabond up out of honest people's way, and very sternly then see that, until he has worked, he does *not* eat. But the first thing is to be sure you have the food to give; and, therefore, to enforce the organisation of vast activities in agriculture and in commerce, for the production of the wholesomest food, and proper storing and distribution of it, so that no famine shall any more be possible among civilised beings. There is plenty of work in this business alone, and at once, for any number of people who like to engage in it.

Secondly, dressing people — that is to say, urging every one within reach of your influence to be always neat and clean, and giving them means of being so. In so far as they absolutely refuse, you must give up the effort with respect to them, only taking care that no children within your sphere of influence shall any more be brought up with such habits; and that every person who is willing to dress with propriety shall have encouragement to do so. And the

first absolutely necessary step towards this is the gradual adoption of a consistent dress for different ranks of persons, so that their rank shall be known by their dress; and the restriction of the changes of fashion within certain limits. All which appears for the present quite impossible; but it is only so far as even difficult as it is difficult to conquer our vanity, frivolity, and desire to appear what we are not. And it is not, nor ever shall be, creed of mine, that these mean and shallow vices are unconquerable by Christian women.

And then, thirdly, lodging people, which you may think should have been put first, but I put it third, because we must feed and clothe people where we find them, and lodge them afterwards. And providing lodgment for them means a great deal of vigorous legislation, and cutting down of vested interests that stand in the way, and after that, or before that, so far as we can get it, thorough sanitary and remedial action in the houses that we have; and then the building of more, strongly, beautifully, and in groups of limited extent, kept in proportion to their streams, and walled round, so that there may be no festering and wretched suburb anywhere, but clean and busy street within, and the open country without, with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round the walls, so that from any part of the city perfectly fresh air and grass,

and sight of far horizon might be reachable in a few minutes' walk. This is the final aim; but in immediate action every minor and possible good to be instantly done, when, and as, we can; roofs mended that have holes in them — fences patched that have gaps in them — walls buttressed that totter — and floors propped that shake; cleanliness and order enforced with our own hands and eyes, till we are breathless, every day. And all the fine arts will healthily follow. I myself have washed a flight of stone stairs all down, with bucket and broom, in a Savoy inn, where they hadn't washed their stairs since they first went up them; and I never made a better sketch than that afternoon.

These, then, are the three first needs of civilised life; and the law for every Christian man and woman is, that they shall be in direct service towards one of these three needs, as far as is consistent with their own special occupation, and if they have no special business, then wholly in one of these services. And out of such exertion in plain duty all other good will come; for in this direct contention with material evil, you will find out the real nature of all evil; you will discern by the various kinds of resistance, what is really the fault and main antagonism to good; also you will find the most unexpected helps and profound lessons given, and truths will come less down to us

which the speculation of all our lives would never have raised us up to. You will find nearly every educational problem solved, as soon as you truly want to do something; everybody will become of use in their own fittest way, and will learn what is best for them to know in that use. Competitive examination will then, and not till then, be wholesome, because it will be daily, and calm, and in practice; and on these familiar arts, and minute, but certain and serviceable knowledges, will be surely edified and sustained the greater arts and splendid theoretical sciences.

But much more than this. On such holy and simple practice will be founded, indeed, at last, an infallible religion. The greatest of all the mysteries of life, and the most terrible, is the corruption of even the sincerest religion, which is not daily founded on rational, effective, humble, and helpful action. Helpful action, observe! for there is just one law, which obeyed, keeps all religions pure — forgotten, makes them all false. Whenever in any religious faith, dark or bright, we allow our minds to dwell upon the points in which we differ from other people, we are wrong, and in the devil's power. That is the essence of the Pharisee's thanksgiving — "Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." At every moment of our lives we should be trying to find out, not in

what we differ with other people, but in what we agree with them; and the moment we find we can agree as to anything that should be done, kind or good, (and who but fools couldn't?) then do it; push at it together; you can't quarrel in a side-by-side push; but the moment that even the best men stop pushing, and begin talking, they mistake their pugnacity for piety, and it's all over. I will not speak of the crimes which in past times have been committed in the name of Christ, nor of the follies which are at this hour held to be consistent with obedience to Him: but I *will* speak of the morbid corruption and waste of vital power in religious sentiment, by which the pure strength of that which should be the guiding soul of every nation, the splendour of its youthful manhood, and spotless light of its maidenhood, is averted or cast away. You may see continually girls who have never been taught to do a single useful thing thoroughly; who cannot sew, who cannot cook, who cannot cast an account, nor prepare a medicine, whose whole life has been passed either in play or in pride; you will find girls like these when they are earnest-hearted, cast all their innate passion of religious spirit, which was meant by God to support them through the irksomeness of daily toil, into grievous and vain meditation over the meaning of the great Book, of which no syllable was ever yet to be

understood but through a deed; all the instinctive wisdom and mercy of their womanhood made vain, and the glory of their pure consciences warped into fruitless agony concerning questions which the laws of common serviceable life would have either solved for them in an instant, or kept out of their way. Give such a girl any true work that will make her active in the dawn, and weary at night, with the consciousness that her fellow-creatures have indeed been the better for her day, and the powerless sorrow of her enthusiasm will transform itself into a majesty of radiant and beneficent peace.

So with our youths. We once taught them to make Latin verses, and called them educated; now we teach them to leap and to row, to hit a ball with a bat, and call them educated. Can they plough, can they sow, can they plant at the right time, or build with a steady hand? Is it the effort of their lives to be chaste, knightly, faithful, holy in thought, lovely in word and deed? Indeed it is, with some, nay with many, and the strength of England is in them, and the hope; but we have to turn their courage from the toil of war to the toil of mercy; and their intellect from dispute of words to discernment of things; and their knighthood from the errantry of adventure to the state and fidelity of a kingly power. And then, indeed, shall abide, for them, and for us an incorruptible

felicity, and an infallible religion; shall abide for us Faith, no more to be assailed by temptation, no more to be defended by wrath and by fear; — shall abide with us Hope, no more to be quenched by the years that overwhelm, or made ashamed by the shadows that betray; shall abide for us, and with us, the greatest of these; the abiding will, the abiding name, of our Father. For the greatest of these, is Charity.

Peace

Peace

THE EAGLE'S NEST, LECTURE IX.

HAVE you ever thought seriously of the meaning of that blessing given to the peacemakers? People are always expecting to get peace in heaven; but you know whatever peace they get there will be ready-made. Whatever making of peace *they* can be blest for, must be on the earth here: not the taking of arms against, but the building of nests amidst, its "sea of troubles." Difficult enough, you think? Perhaps so, but I do not see that any of us try. We complain of the want of many things — we want votes, we want liberty, we want amusement, we want money. Which of us feels, or knows, that he wants peace?

There are two ways of getting it, if you do want it. The first is wholly in your own power; to make yourselves nests of pleasant thoughts. Those are nests on the sea indeed, but safe beyond all others; only they need much art in the building. None of us yet know, for none

of us have yet been taught in early youth, what fairy palaces we may build of beautiful thought — proof against all adversity. Bright fancies, satisfied memories, noble histories, faithful sayings, treasure-houses of precious and restful thoughts, which care cannot disturb, nor pain make gloomy, nor poverty take away from us — houses built without hands, for our souls to live in.

And in actual life, let me assure you, in conclusion, the first "wisdom of calm," is to plan, and resolve to labour for, the comfort and beauty of a home such as, if we could obtain it, we would quit no more. Not a compartment of a model lodging-house, not the number so-and-so of Paradise Row; but a cottage all of our own, with its little garden, its pleasant view, its surrounding fields, its neighbouring stream, its healthy air, and clean kitchen, parlours, and bedrooms. Less than this, no man should be content with for his nest; more than this few should seek: but if it seem to you impossible, or wildly imaginary, that such houses should ever be obtained for the greater part of the English people, again believe me, the obstacles which are in the way of our obtaining them are the things which it must be the main object now of all true science, true art, and true literature to overcome. Science does its duty, not in telling us the causes of spots in the sun; but in

explaining to us the laws of our own life, and the consequences of their violation. Art does its duty, not in filling monster galleries with frivolous, or dreadful, or indecent pictures; but in completing the comforts and refining the pleasures of daily occurrence, and familiar service: and literature does its duty, not in wasting our hours in political discussion, or in idle fiction; but in raising our fancy to the height of what may be noble, honest, and felicitous in actual life; — in giving us, though we may ourselves be poor and unknown, the companionship of the wisest fellow-spirits of every age and country, — and in aiding the communication of clear thoughts and faithful purposes, among distant nations, which will at last breathe calm upon the sea of lawless passion, and change into such halcyon days the winter of the world, that the birds of the air may have their nests in peace, and the Son of Man, where to lay his head.

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